DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 094 TM 029 631

AUTHOR	Kanstoroom, Marci, Ed.; Finn, Chester E., Jr., Ed.
TITLE	New Directions: Federal Education Policy in the Twenty-First Century.
INSTITUTION	Manhattan Inst. for Policy Research, New York, NY.; Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-03-00
NOTE	182p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Tel: 888-TBF-7474 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.edexcellence.net (single copies free).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Educational Change; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Programs; Futures (of Society); *Government Role; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS	Elementary Secondary Education Act; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

Contributors to this collection examine how today's federal education programs work and show how, instead of working for school improvement, these programs have begun to function as obstacles to the efforts of reform-minded states and schools. The following essays are included: (1) "Overview: Thirty-Four Years of Dashed Hopes" (Chester E. Finn, Jr., Marci Kanstoroom, and Michael J. Petrilli); (2) "Title I: Despite the Best of Intentions" (Tyce Palmaffy); (3) "Title I: Wrong Help at the Wrong Time" (Stanley Pogrow); (4) "Title II: Does Professional Development Work?" (John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom); (5) "Title IV: Neither Safe nor Drug Free" (Matthew Rees); (6) "School-to-Work: Right Problem, Wrong Solution" (Carol Innerst); (7) "Michigan: Setting Priorities Straight" (John Engler); (8) "Arizona: Back Off, Washington" (Lisa Graham Keegan); (9) "Pennsylvania: Vesting Power in the People" (Eugene W. Hickok); (10) "Colorado: Trust but Verify" (William J. Maloney and Richard G. Elmer); (11) "Houston: Washington...We Have a Problem" (Susan Sclafani and Don McAdams); (12) "Student Performance: The National Agenda in Education" (Diane Ravitch); and (13) "Getting It Right the Eighth Time: Reinventing the Federal Role" (Paul T. Hill). Each chapter contains endnotes. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 429 094

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marci Kanstoroom

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NEW DIRECTIONS

FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

TM029631

FORDHAM

MI

2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NEW DIRECTIONS

FEDERAL EDUCATION POLICY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Marci Kanstoroom and Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Editors

Published By

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

THOMAS B. FORDHAM FOUNDATION

OUTSIDE THE BOX

In Cooperation With

The Manhattan Institute

MI

MANHATTAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

March 1999

Table of Contents

Foreword
Chester E. Finn, Jr. v

Preface
Rev. Floyd Flake vii

Chapter Summaries ix

Overview: Thirty-Four Years of Dashed Hopes

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Marci Kanstoroom, and Michael J. Petrilli 1

Today's Programs: How Well Do They Work?

Title I: Despite the Best of Intentions
Tyce Palmaffy 17

Title I: Wrong Help at the Wrong Time
Stanley Pogrow 41

Title II: Does Professional Development Work?
John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom 61

Title IV: Neither Safe nor Drug-Free
Matthew Rees 79

School-to-Work: Right Problem, Wrong Solution
Carol Innerst 101

Beyond the Beltway: The Case for Change

Michigan: Setting Priorities Straight
The Honorable John Engler 117

Arizona: Back Off, Washington
Lisa Graham Keegan 121

Pennsylvania: Vesting Power in the People
Eugene W. Hickok 127

Colorado: Trust but Verify
William J. Moloney and Richard G. Elmer 133

Houston: Washington...We Have a Problem
Susan Sclafani and Don McAdams 135

New Directions: Federal Education Policy in the Twenty-First Century

Student Performance: The National Agenda in Education
Diane Ravitch 139

Getting It Right the Eighth Time: Reinventing the Federal Role
Paul T. Hill 147

Contributors 171

Foreword

As we enter 1999, polls show that education remains the number one issue on voters' minds, and elected officials at every level of government are eager to get in on the action. Promising to make our schools better is as American as mom and apple pie. Who could oppose efforts by the President and Congress to turn failing schools around and ensure that every student has a qualified teacher?

With the thirty-four year old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) up for reauthorization this year, politicians in Washington are already proposing some brand-new programs to add to the mix of sixty plus that already occupy ESEA alone. But are more programs from Washington what our schools really need? More controls? More regulations? Might there be a different way to think about federal education policy? Perhaps even a better way?

The contributors to this volume—a remarkable gathering of governors, state education chiefs, noted education experts, and journalists—here take a close look at how today's federal education programs work. They paint a generally bleak picture. Developed in an era when U.S. schools faced radically different problems than they face today, the present array of ESEA programs is badly outdated. Instead of promoting the cause of better schools, these programs have begun to function as obstacles to the efforts of reform-minded states and schools.

The goal of the essays in this book is not to get Washington out of the education business, nor to slash, burn, or abolish anything, but to help envision a bold alternative to the existing federal role in education. The ESEA reauthorization cycle presents the nation with an opportunity to think anew, to imagine something different and, we believe, better for America's children, including especially the neediest among them. The essays in this volume provide a guide to how the federal role in education can be reinvented.

The book is divided into three parts: overviews of the federal role and how to rethink it, case studies that analyze the effectiveness of some of today's most prominent programs, and short essays describing how the present federal role appears from the perspectives of states and cities. Abstracts of the papers appear in the "Chapter Summaries" section that follows Rev. Flake's preface and again at the beginning of each chapter. Brief biographical sketches of the contributors appear at the end of the book.

To my delight, this volume is a joint product—the first such—of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Manhattan Institute, a prominent research center with a special interest

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in urban affairs and education reform. As Rev. Floyd Flake, former Democratic congressman from Queens, notes in the preface, the story of the federal government's role in education is in many respects the story of a sincere but sorely flawed attempt to ensure equal educational opportunities for low-income children. The plight of children in New York City (and other large urban school districts) who are trapped in ineffective and often dangerous schools is what gives special urgency to the need to reinvent the federal role in education.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation is a private foundation that supports research, publications, and action projects in elementary/secondary education reform at the national level and in the vicinity of Dayton, Ohio. Further information can be obtained from our website (www.edexcellence.net) or by writing us at 1627 K Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006. (We can also be e-mailed through our website.) This report is available in full on the Foundation's website, and hard copies can be obtained by calling 1-888-TBF-7474 (single copies are free).

Chester E. Finn, Jr.,
President, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and
John M. Olin Fellow, Manhattan Institute
Washington, DC

March 1999

Preface

Rev. Floyd Flake

Fixing America's schools is on everyone's mind these days, and no schools are in more urgent need of fixing than the schools in our urban communities. Year after year, public schools in America's inner cities lose almost as many young people as they graduate, and those who do make it through to the end of school often lack basic skills in reading, math and science.

In New York State, only 39 percent of urban fourth graders reach the "basic" level in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In a recent survey, only 5 percent of New York City employers rated the writing skills of local public school graduates "good" or "excellent". And 86 percent of them agreed that a New York City high school diploma is no guarantee that a young person has learned the basics.

Educating the next generation should be America's number one priority, and we should refuse to accept the failure of schools to educate young people in urban communities. Indeed, this is what federal education policy should be about.

In theory, it already is. Since 1965, the federal government has focused its dollars and energies on ensuring that disadvantaged and at-risk children are not shortchanged by schools; the overriding goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was providing equal educational opportunities for low-income children.

But while over $100 billion in Title I funds have been expended on behalf of these children, these funds have not made much difference. Study after study has shown that this important federal program has failed to narrow the achievement gap. The result, for America's neediest girls and boys, is nothing short of tragic.

It is time to stop defending an indefensible system in which our public schools do not provide every child with a real opportunity to learn. It is time to rethink how Washington's role in education policy should work.

A good place to start is to examine some education reforms that are actually working in many parts of the country. There is no shortage of exciting developments. In Milwaukee and Cleveland, low-income parents have the opportunity to send their children to the schools of their choice, with the government providing scholarships to pay for it. Parents in thirty-five

states can send their children to charter schools, independent public schools that can operate without much red tape so long as they demonstrate that their students are learning. What these reforms share is that they put student learning first, ahead of all other goals. While some view such reforms as risky experiments, the gains in student learning that they're producing make it hard to understand why anyone would object to expanding them.

Real education reform will transform the future prospects of America's minority and low-income children. But this cannot come primarily from Washington. What the federal government can do is get out of the way of states and communities that are serious about pursuing real education reforms of their own devising. And it's been my impression that the places most serious about education reform—and ensuring a quality education for every child in America—are those that take advantage of the tremendous energy generated when parents are able to choose their children's schools.

The 106th Congress has the opportunity to turn an ineffective school spending program into a real force for change. In this volume are essays that collectively provide a roadmap to this destination.

As you read the case studies of several existing federal programs, you will come to understand how it is that the billions Washington has spent over three decades have failed to make U.S. schools into world class institutions. You will hear a chorus of voices, from the governor of Michigan to a school board member in Houston, urging Uncle Sam to change his basic approach to education policy. And you will hear from some education experts who have distilled the broad challenges facing federal policymakers into some concrete proposals about the direction that federal education policy should take.

We all know that America's schools are not yet what they could and must be. It is time for the national government to insist that the $13 billion it spends on ESEA every year be used to cure what ails many of those schools, especially the schools that the most disadvantaged children attend. This volume shows how a different federal role in education could do just that.

Chapter Summaries

Overview: Thirty-Four Years of Dashed Hopes

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Marci Kanstoroom, and Michael J. Petrilli

Washington's role in K-12 education needs a major overhaul. The existing programs are ill-suited to today's pressing education problems. Many of them do more harm than good. Washington is funding the forces resisting change rather than those working for change. It's time for a fundamental shift to a new mission of raising student achievement and enhancing school effectiveness. Reorienting federal policy so that it is about today's goals rather than yesterday's paradigms will require imagination and courage. Washington should set high academic achievement as the top priority for U.S. schools; parents and states should be trusted with key decisions affecting children; and real accountability for results should replace compliance with rules.

Today's Programs: How Well Do They Work?

Title I: Despite the Best of Intentions

Tyce Palmaffy

Enacted in 1965 to redress the educational disadvantages of poor students, Title I has evolved into a complex, hybrid program that is not fulfilling its mission. It has failed to narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students. Its tortuous rules and regulations seek to ensure that funds benefit their intended recipients but have created perverse incentives at the local level and a substandard education for the most at-risk students. This paper documents the history of Title I and explains how we arrived at today's version. It identifies weaknesses in the current structure and suggests that funds should be made portable to empower parents to make decisions about their children's education and create accountability mechanisms that focus on student achievement.

Title I: Wrong Help at the Wrong Time

Stanley Pogrow

The basic Title I strategy has changed repeatedly over the last thirty-four years, but each succeeding initiative has failed to produce real improvement in the achievement of disadvantaged

youth. Most recently, the federal government has embraced a strategy of flexibility and accountability, but in name only. In reality, Washington promotes practices that have not been proven effective and the new accountability system is full of holes. What really limits the effectiveness of Title I is a basic mismatch between the services provided to disadvantaged children and the youngsters' real learning needs. The key to making Title I more effective is understanding the diverse learning needs of disadvantaged students and then providing them with the right kinds of help at the right time.

Title II: Does Professional Development Work?

John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom

The Eisenhower Professional Development program was created to boost pupil achievement in math and science by strengthening the skills of teachers. The main finding of this report is that, despite its rhetoric, today's Eisenhower program has no clear link to improved student performance. The activities it supports typically involve short workshops and, while there has been some effort to focus them on high-level academic content and link them with state academic standards, there is no evidence that this kind of professional development has any real impact on teaching or learning. Congress should transform this program from an unimpressive handout to a potent mechanism for boosting student achievement.

Title IV: Neither Safe nor Drug-Free

Matthew Rees

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program is meant to curtail teen drug use and violence through school-based prevention programs. To preserve local control, it has few federal regulations and little oversight of how funds are spent. It is neither a categorical program nor a block grant. Millions are being spent on activities with no record of success. Lawmakers should either turn it into a true categorical program (with requirements to ensure that funds are used on proven prevention programs) or a flexible block grant with accountability for results.

School-to-Work: Right Problem, Wrong Solution

Carol Innerst

Many who enter the workforce straight from high school lack the skills needed to succeed there. To remedy this, Congress passed the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in 1994. Its goal is to promote career awareness and job training for students of all ages. Because such activities displace academic instruction, the program has been criticized for allowing business interests to weaken the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Rather than targeting the program at students who are headed directly to the workplace, School-to-Work activities are often universal. The experience with STW demonstrates that Washington is better at identifying problems than devising solutions.

Beyond the Beltway: The Case for Change

Michigan: Setting Priorities Straight

The Honorable John Engler

Federal categorical programs do worse than nothing. They divert states and distract schools from educating children. This "governmentalization" of public education means that those closest to children—principals and teachers—are unable to make common sense decisions. Simply to call this problem "red tape" trivializes it. Not every good idea needs to become a government program. Federal "one-size-fits- all" solutions undermine the creativity of states. The federal role should include an expanded NAEP and solid research capacity and should free the states to develop appropriate responses as they think best.

Arizona: Back Off, Washington

Lisa Graham Keegan

Education is the number one concern of voters, but before we ask the federal government to do something about it, we should think carefully about what we expect. Washington's customary method for addressing an education problem is to create another federal program, with all its attendant paperwork and red tape. Federal programs have tied dollars to bureaucracies and institutions, not to students. Such programs thrive on student stagnation and failure, leading to perverse incentives that mitigate against sensible local policy and responsibility. What we need are critical decisions made by parents and teachers, not Washington.

Pennsylvania: Vesting Power in the People

Eugene W. Hickok

Washington has managed to wedge itself into education policy at every level, despite the fact that the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of education. For some time now, the President has sounded like a combination governor and school superintendent. Yet he does not employ teachers or run schools. Federal funding should be provided with fewer strings. Whom do we trust to get education right? States and communities should have greater autonomy, but real decisions must be vested with parents, employers, and taxpayers.

Colorado: Trust but Verify

William J. Moloney and Richard G. Elmer

Over time, federal, state, and local education officials have come to focus on compliance with regulations rather than providing services that help children. A combination of entrenched bureaucracy and its predilection for the status quo means that needed reforms have been ignored. Every policy decision should be based on the best interests of the child. Freedom to make decisions locally in exchange for accountability for results should guide ESEA reforms. What is needed today is a commitment to trust local educators, yet verify the accomplishment of children.

Houston: Washington . . . We Have a Problem

Susan Sclafani and Don McAdams

Federal education programs could be more helpful to local reform efforts if Congress would lift the regulatory burden. The law continues to mandate that all districts spend an inordinate amount of time documenting their compliance with complicated and unnecessary rules. It would be much more effective for the federal government to allocate dollars to local school districts and hold them responsible for their results.

New Directions: Federal Education Policy in the Twenty-First Century

Student Performance: The National Agenda in Education

Diane Ravitch

The thirty year old federal education programs were mostly designed to remove legal barriers and provide equality of access. Now, federal policy should attach the highest priority to strategies that boost student performance. Funding formulas should be changed so that federal aid follows the child. "Out-of-the-box" reforms should be embraced, such as vouchers, charter schools, state (and national) testing, and teacher testing as remedies for our ailing schools. Federally funded demonstration programs could be used to resolve debates that have been deadlocked by politics and ideology. The overriding strategy must be to redesign policies and programs so that funds and incentives serve to educate children, not preserve the system.

Getting It Right the Eighth Time: Reinventing the Federal Role

Paul T. Hill

Since the passage of ESEA in 1965, the greatest single effect of federal programs has been to weaken schools as organizations and strengthen the forces that tear them apart. This is the result of diverting funds and energy from regular instruction and focusing them on special programs and populations. It is time to rethink the federal role in education. The current rules and regulations constrain states and districts from employing the knowledge and practices that would make a real difference to student performance and academic progress. Today, schools function as holding companies for many separate federal programs. Because of Washington's demands, the instructional experiences of students are fragmented, and responsibility for performance has been diffused. Instead, the federal government should foster local initiatives, hold states accountable, and disseminate information about good and bad results.

Overview: Thirty-Four Years of Dashed Hopes

Chester E. Finn, Jr., Marci Kanstoroom and Michael J. Petrilli

Washington's role in K-12 education needs a major overhaul. The existing programs are ill-suited to today's pressing education problems. Many of them do more harm than good. Washington is funding the forces resisting change rather than those working for change. It's time for a fundamental shift to a new mission of raising student achievement and enhancing school effectiveness. Reorienting federal policy so that it is about today's goals rather than yesterday's paradigms will require imagination and courage. Washington should set high academic achievement as the top priority for U.S. schools; parents and states should be trusted with key decisions affecting children; and real accountability for results should replace compliance with rules.

Since 1965, when Washington embarked on its first major primary-secondary education initiative, federal policy has strongly influenced America's schools. Although education is generally considered a state responsibility, Uncle Sam has made it his business to try to right a number of educational wrongs. To these ends, the federal government has intervened, first on behalf of children who were seen as poorly served by local schools, and later on behalf of a broad range of goals that states were seen as ignoring. Today, the federal government pursues its education agenda through a wide range of programs; sixty of them, worth over $11 billion, are included in the mammoth Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was last reauthorized in 1994. While federal dollars make up only about 7 percent of America's total budget for K-12 education, Washington's role is enormous when it comes to setting state and local priorities and determining the tenor and content of the national conversation about education. As the 106th Congress begins the process of reauthorizing ESEA, the time has come to assess how well federal education policy is working.

. . . the existing programs are ill-suited to today's pressing education problems, harmful to the main mission of schools and to serious efforts to reform them, and unsuccessful even in their own terms.

Our appraisal finds that Washington's role in K-12 education needs a major overhaul. By and large, the existing programs are ill-suited to today's pressing education problems, harmful to the main mission of schools and to serious efforts to reform them, and unsuccessful even in their own terms. As Diane Ravitch writes, "All were established with high hopes, but none has lived up to the expectations of its sponsors. All are ripe for reform."[1]

Why Federal Programs Need to be Overhauled

1. They are ill-suited to today's education problems

Framers of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act faced a very different set of problems than we face today. Their challenge was to expand access to schools and services on behalf of children who had been left out or badly served. The largest federal education programs—for needy children, for youngsters with disabilities, for those who do not speak English, etc.—were about ensuring equality of opportunity. This has now largely been accomplished in terms of access to education services. Today, the principal problems that the nation faces—and that needy youngsters in particular face—are very different. Although access to education is now virtually universal, the schools that many children have access to are mediocre. They are neither effective nor efficient and they do not produce the desired results. On a host of international comparisons, the achievement of U.S. students is at the middle (in reading) or bottom (in science, math, and geography) of the rankings. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that 38 percent of fourth-grade students do not even attain "basic" achievement levels in reading. In math, 38 percent of eighth graders score below basic level, as do 43 percent of twelfth graders in science.[2] Achievement (and school-completion) levels for minority children and inner-city residents are catastrophic. Once the pacesetter in graduation rates, the United States now trails other advanced countries even on this dimension; our high-school completion rate of 72 percent places us second to last among twenty-nine industrialized nations.

The world has changed in the three decades since federal education policy gained its present contours. The programs we have inherited from the 1960s and 1970s were created to respond to very different challenges from those that we face today. They are based on assumptions that are now outdated, and were conceived for a purpose that has now largely been accomplished. Washington's efforts (and dollars and regulations) have not turned U.S. schools into world-class institutions because that was never their central purpose. "If measured by the goals of removing legal barriers and providing equality of access," Ravitch comments, "federal policy has been successful. Now federal education policies must attach the highest priority to strategies that boost student performance for all groups."[3]

As Washington shifts from the old goal of equalizing opportunity to the new mission of elevating pupil achievement and school effectiveness, a host of programs and policies will need to be updated. Can programs designed to boost supply and increase access readily be recast to raise educational achievement? Not easily, if at all, we think, and certainly not by means of minor adjustments and marginal amendments. A much more fundamental overhaul is called for.

2. They are harmful to the main mission of schools and to serious efforts to reform them

The thirty-year-old programs that soldier on today, and more recent programs based on similarly outdated goals, may now do more harm than good. "Has the federal role in educa-

tion that has developed served to improve or damage American K-12 public education?" Paul Hill asks. His own judgment is that, while they have often "caused changes that helped low income and minority children, federal programs have often done harm to those same children's education—and everyone else's—by weakening the schools."[4]

Hill observes that, by diverting funds and energy away from the main mission of schools—general instruction—and toward special programs for particular populations, federal programs have torn schools apart. They have undermined them and caused them to lose their organizational coherence. The suggestion that federal programs now actually interfere with successful education is seconded by Michigan Governor John Engler: "[Federal programs] cause schools to set false priorities and waste time 'going after grants' and they encourage faddish and short-lived 'reforms' that die as soon as 'funding streams' run dry....In short, the federal categorical education programs do worse than nothing. They divert and distract schools from their ultimate mission: educating children."[5]

It is not only schools that are distracted from their main task; those who could keep them on track also become distracted. States seeking to pursue serious reform find themselves lost in confusion or snarled in red tape. William Moloney, Colorado Commissioner of Education, and Richard Elmer, Deputy Commissioner, write that the involvement of the federal government "has served to confuse nearly everyone."[6] Lisa Graham Keegan, Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction, writes that state and local decision making is distorted by "the lure of federal dollars tied to programs with hazily-defined goals and well-defined regulations."

The sheer number and complexity of those regulations, the requirement that each program must be separately accounted for, and the huge number of state (and, often, local) enforcers whose sole function is to manage an individual federal program, make life difficult for anyone hoping to reform the schools. Keegan counts 165 employees in the Arizona Department of Education who are responsible for managing federal programs; that works out to 45 percent of her staff being paid to oversee about 6 percent of Arizona's total spending on education. "Every minute we spend making sure we're in compliance with all those pages of federal regulations means one less minute we can spend helping teachers with professional development, improving curriculum, developing our own testing standards, and ensuring that all children are getting all the help they need to succeed," Keegan writes.[7] According to Governor Engler, administering these programs requires so much staff that only 48 cents of every federal education dollar actually reach the classroom in Michigan.

Washington's regulations not only promote waste, but also foster a mindset of complying with rules rather than getting the job done.

Washington's regulations not only promote waste, but also foster a mindset of complying with rules rather than getting the job done. Bureaucrats must account for the funds, but not necessarily for instructional productivity, Moloney and Elmer write. Years of regulation based on process rather than results have fostered bureaucratic behavior at all levels. "These are the requirements." "We never did it that way before." "It sounds good but the feds would never allow it."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

An immense bureaucracy has developed and must be sustained by continuous infusions of federal funds. It isn't only federal employees, but also extensive colonies of federal program administrators in state and local education agencies that absorb dollars. Too much money goes to underwrite administrators and middlemen rather than to educate children. Diane Ravitch describes the challenge: "At present, American education is mired in patterns of low productivity, uncertain standards, and lack of accountability. Federal education programs have tended to reinforce these regularities by adding additional layers of rules, mandates, and bureaucracy. The most important national priority must be to redesign policies and programs so that education funding is used to educate children, not to preserve the system."[8]

3. They are unsuccessful even in their own terms

The third problem with today's programs is that they aren't achieving the goals that Congress set for them. Title I, the centerpiece of the federal role in education and its most ambitious effort, has become perhaps its greatest disappointment. The largest program (now nearly $8 billion annually), Title I was designed to focus attention on the educational needs of disadvantaged children and then meet those needs by providing their schools with additional money to be used for compensatory services such as tutoring. While this program may have succeeded in making the education of disadvantaged children a priority, it was also intended that Title I would narrow the actual achievement gap between poor and advantaged children.

Thirty years and $100 billion later, more than a hundred local and state evaluations of the program have concluded that Title I has failed to meet that goal, reports Tyce Palmaffy. Two large federally funded studies have attempted to determine what this program has accomplished; both found that it has had—at best—a marginal effect on student achievement. "[T]here was no indication in the Prospects data that participation improved students' educational outcomes," concluded the more recent of these studies, which tracked 40,000 students for three years.[9] Summing up an extensive analysis of the program, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Ralph Frammolino writes, "The federal government's largest education grant program, despite spending $118 billion over the last three decades, has been unable to meet its goal of narrowing the achievement gap between rich and poor students."[10]

Numerous attempts to repair the program have made little difference. As veteran Title I observer Stan Pogrow recalls, we've tried "supplying services to needy students outside of the regular classroom during the school day (pull-out services), furnishing extra help in the classroom, providing help after school, helping individual students, helping groups of students, and improving whole schools. At different times the emphasis has been on developing basic skills, advanced skills, and self concept. Each new initiative has been accompanied by brave talk from federal officials, practitioners, and researchers as to how this time they had it right....Each apparent failure stimulated new coalitions to push for different approaches in the next reauthorization cycle. Some approaches have been recycled several times."[11] Even its staunchest advocates are increasingly frustrated by Title I's long-term failure to close the achievement gap, although some of these same constituencies are already arguing that it's still too early to tell whether 1994's "sweeping" changes have had any impact.

What about some of the less ambitious ESEA programs? The Eisenhower Professional Development Program was designed to improve teaching in math and science. Initially created to develop math and science teachers' knowledge and skills as a way of addressing the poor performance of American students in those subjects, it funds activities that are supposed to emphasize in-depth understanding of subject matter and to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching. This is an altogether worthy purpose today, as it was when the program began in 1984. As Diane Ravitch notes, "Students are unlikely to be high achievers unless their teachers are knowledgeable in the subject they are teaching. Yet many teachers, particularly in mathematics and science, are teaching 'out-of-field'—that is, without either a major or a minor in their main teaching assignment."[12] Fully 39.5 percent of those whose main teaching assignment is in science are teaching out of field, as are 34 percent of math teachers. For the average teacher, however, the Eisenhower Professional Development program provides only a single workshop of six hours or less. It has essentially no effect on teachers' knowledge of the subjects they are responsible for imparting to their pupils, find John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom.[13]

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools program suffers similar shortcomings. For the daunting task of ridding schools of illegal drugs and violence, districts are offered paltry sums of money. And these grants are spent in ways that seem unlikely to make much of a dent in the problems of drug use and violence among youth—on trips to amusement parks and puppet shows, for instance. Even the most popular curricula that have been designed by companies with an eye toward Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds have no demonstrated effects on student drug use or violence. What is most distressing is that there is no effort to hold anyone accountable for how they spend these funds. When he examined the program for this volume, journalist Matt Rees found that state education agencies often knew little about how their Safe and Drug-Free School grant money is spent, and Washington knew even less. The General Accounting Office investigated accountability in the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program in 1996-97. According to Rees, the GAO's most compelling finding was that "there is no method in place to determine the program's overall effectiveness."[14]

The idea of the federal government driving education reform from the top down has itself been turned on its head by energetic states and schools that are now the key sources of new ideas.

A longer list of federal programs cannot definitively be branded failures but that is primarily because their aims are so nebulous or trivial that they could not possibly fail. The main thing they do is move money around. The Ready to Learn Television program spends $7 million to develop educational TV programming focused on school readiness. Three million dollars in Women's Educational Equity grants are used to train teachers and guidance counselors to implement gender equity policies. No effort has been made to evaluate their effectiveness because there are no standards for success.

On the whole, today's federal elementary-secondary programs have not achieved their own goals. Worse, they do not even take aim at the main problems facing schools today, while managing to get in the way of those who try to reform schools. Paul Hill writes, "No one can claim that the current chaotic system of laws, regulations, constraints, and preferences is the

best one that we Americans could design for our children."[15] And now that we understand the fecklessness and harmfulness of so many federal programs and policies, what could justify persevering with more of the same, or engaging in minor amending when what is called for is a thoroughgoing overhaul?

Back to Basics

To rethink the ESEA programs and modernize the federal role in education, we must first rethink the ideas that underlie them: not only our dated notions about the problems but also our antiquated concepts of how to solve them. The federal role should be recast around today's problems and priorities rather than those of the mid-1960s, and also around today's understanding of the real sources of energy and innovation in education.

The main federal programs were designed when it was believed that what chiefly ailed U.S. education was a shortage of services and resources, particularly for those with special needs. Programs arising from that worldview are bound to be ill-suited to an era when mediocrity rather than inadequacy is the country's premier education woe.

Today's federal programs were also designed for a time when states and communities were seen as untrustworthy: set in their ways, ill-informed, miserly, sometimes discriminatory, ignorant of education research, and resistant to effective practices. In this view, Washington's role was to foster innovation, justice, and the dissemination of knowledge. Today, however, that no longer makes much sense. States (and some communities) are taking the lead in transforming U.S. schools. Washington's programs and policies often get in their way.

Charter schools are a good example. These independent public schools of choice are hugely popular with parents, seem to boost pupil achievement, and appear to meet the needs of children and families. Thirty-five states have enacted laws providing for them, yet Washington for the most part pretends they don't exist. A charter school that caters to low income or disabled pupils ought to be entitled to the same federal aid that these children receive in other public schools, yet the program formulas, regulations, administrative practices, and red tape make it difficult for charter schools to get their fair share of these funds. (This is not too surprising when you consider that Washington's chief "partner" in these programs is the very local education agencies that charter schools seek to escape from.) When not ignoring charter schools, Uncle Sam often blocks their way. Parents of children with special needs who choose a charter school that runs special education in an unconventional way are apt to find their child's school under investigation by the federal Office for Civil Rights. The federal Department of Justice is also apt to breathe down their necks to see if they are in full compliance with decades-old desegregation orders.

The idea of the federal government driving education reform from the top down has itself been turned on its head by energetic states and schools that are now the key sources of new ideas. Far from being stodgy, recalcitrant, and ignorant, the states today are bubbling labs of education innovation. "In a friendly way, we governors compete with one another," writes Governor Engler. "We all watch carefully the policy initiatives advanced by our col-

leagues and how well they are working in their states and we look for ways that they might work in our own."

Texas and North Carolina have both recharged their schools by building comprehensive accountability systems with real carrots and sticks. Both states begin by administering tests that measure whether students have met the state's academic standards. The states rate all schools based on how well their students measure up on the tests, and schools that consistently fail can be taken over, reconstituted, or closed. Schools that make real progress are rewarded with extra cash. Perhaps not coincidentally, these two states posted the biggest gains in scores between 1990 and 1996 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Arizona has tried a different approach. Schools are given more independence, and accountability is provided both by the marketplace and by new statewide standards and assessments. Parents can send children to the schools of their choice, which now include more charter schools than any other state has.

While a number of states are leading the way with imaginative reforms, few of these innovations are emerging from the traditional education bureaucracies. This points to a third way in which federal education policy is antiquated. Today's programs were designed for a time when state and local school systems were assumed to be Washington's allies in education reform and also the main source of solutions to problems. Billions of federal dollars have been channeled into these state and local education bureaucracies—and along the way they have come to be treated as Washington's client and chief constituency. Instead of a model that encourages schools to meet the needs of their students, parents, and communities, we have a model in which schools answer to the compliance demands levied by three tiers of federal program administrators. Moreover, entrusting virtually all the federal dollars to SEAs and LEAs means that they are frequently beyond the reach of change-minded governors, mayors, principals, teachers, and community groups. It often appears that Washington is subsidizing the agencies that need to be changed rather than those who want to change them.

Federal programs need to be overhauled because these old paradigms are obsolete. Too much has changed since the programs were designed. The essential nature of the education problem facing the United States is different, a crisis of quality, a crisis that needs the national government to focus on student performance and school effectiveness. States and some communities are today's innovators. Washington needs to get out of their way—or, better, do whatever it takes to foster and facilitate their efforts.

A Rare Opportunity

Today America faces a unique chance to overhaul the federal role in education. As Congress reauthorizes ESEA, the federal role could be substantially reshaped via this one statute. The time is clearly ripe. Education was the number one issue on voters' minds in 1998, outdistancing even Social Security, health care, taxes, and the economy. Surveys make it clear that parents and taxpayers want more from their education dollars, and in particular, want stronger student performance in basic skills. They see quality schools as crucial to economic opportuni-

ty for their children and for long-term prosperity for their country. They want standards to be set high and they want real accountability for results. As William Galston has explained, "People are getting very, very impatient. They are willing to do more. But they are not willing to invest more in the status quo."[16] Many states have been heeding this call, launching bold school reforms that are starting to show good results. They are demanding quality from their schools and students and insisting on real change in their institutional arrangements. They are willing to pay the financial price for increased quality, too. Now is the time to make bipartisan progress on education—while the economy is strong and the budget balanced.

Reorienting federal policy so that it is about today's goals rather than yesterday's paradigms will require no small amount of imagination and courage. The country's experience with welfare reform is a promising model. For decades, liberals and conservatives argued over whether welfare payments were the way to solve social problems. Only in the 1990s did voters of all stripes begin to move past abstract disputes to see the basic welfare system itself as deeply flawed. Not only were its programs unsuccessful in achieving their goals, they actually did harm, especially to children. Bipartisan agreement that the old system needed overhauling produced a radical reinvention of the program. The familiar system of entitlements and regulations was essentially scrapped, replaced by a flexible block grant to states to come up with creative ways of solving social problems. Bringing ESEA into the modern era will require similar courage and imagination.

In our view, there is one and only one transcendent national education objective worthy of being enshrined in federal policy in 1999: higher academic achievement for all students.

The watchwords of the new federal role should be excellence, accountability, and innovation. Federal programs should respond to parents and children, not bolster the system. Washington should aid, not hinder, reform-minded states and communities.

How can we best ensure that tomorrow's programs focus on student performance and encourage states and communities to pursue reform? Minor tweaking won't do it. Most of these programs have too much wrong. Reinventing federal education policy means more than clearing a bit of regulatory underbrush. It means thinking hard about the fundamental nature of the federal role in education and asking the most basic questions about what Washington should be doing in this field.

The Big Questions

As we see it, Congress needs to make three basic decisions about the future federal role in education. From these should flow the key details about strategy and programs. First, ought Washington to focus henceforth on the single priority of boosting academic achievement or continue to embrace a plethora of objectives? Second, once national priorities are set, who should be entrusted with money and control to ensure that we reach them? Third, should accountability be based on compliance or results?

1. Should Washington focus henceforth on the single national priority of boosting academic achievement or continue to embrace a plethora of objectives?

Ever since President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), a consensus has been forming in America: high academic achievement must be a top national priority. In order to remain competitive and cultivate citizenship, our students must learn much more than they are learning now. This conviction is neither conservative nor liberal, neither Republican nor Democrat.

But while Congress has paid lip service to student performance as a priority for ESEA and other programs, it has also embraced myriad objectives that relate in various ways to schools or to education but that are essentially peripheral to academics. As the reports in this volume illustrate, most federal education programs arose when a president or Congress sensed a need to respond to some urgent problem. A crack cocaine epidemic was sweeping the cities and politicians feared that a generation of schoolchildren would be swept along. A report announced that seven out of ten high school graduates who head directly from school to work lack the skills needed to succeed in the workplace. Computers had arrived and not enough Americans knew how to use them. And so forth and so on. Washington's response to every such alarm was to add new priorities and create new programs.

The School-To-Work (STW) program, launched in 1994 to upgrade the skills of the nation's workforce, demonstrates this phenomenon. Reacting to a study that found many high-school graduates unprepared for the jobs awaiting them, STW was (and is) intended to provide job training and career awareness activities for all students. Instead of making coursework more interesting and rigorous for work-bound students, however, STW has encouraged the introduction of dubious experiential curricula for all students, with work-related activities displacing academic coursework. This was especially disappointing since many of the workplace skills that students lack are the same ones developed through rigorous academics. But Congress set a priority (workplace readiness), provided a bit of money, and in so doing altered the objectives of thousands of schools.

A similar story can be told about the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. Who could argue that our schools ought not be safe and drug-free? Should this be a national priority? But of course. In the rhetoric of the 1980s, we were fighting a "war" on drugs. Wars are fought by nations. They are great national crusades.

So a new education program was created and funds started to flow. In addition to academics, schools now needed to focus on being safe and drug-free places. And as priority-shaping goes, the strategy worked: these new funds—trickle though they were—served to change schools' missions. Instead of focusing all their federal dollars on teachers and books, schools began to spend some on anti-drug assemblies and metal detectors.

This kind of approach pulls schools in multiple directions and diffuses their mission. Maybe curbing drugs and ensuring safety is worth that cost. But maybe federal policymakers would do better to show restraint—and political courage—by committing to academic achievement to the exclusion of all else. National energy and federal money can only go so far. Schools can

do only so much. And for better or for worse, national priorities and federal dollars set much of their agenda.

In our view, there is one and only one transcendent national education objective worthy of being enshrined in federal policy in 1999: higher academic achievement for all students and schools. Academics is what schools are best at—maybe all they're really good at—and if we're serious about improving academic performance we must encourage all our schools to focus on this core mission. Everything else, however worthy, is peripheral and secondary—or is important but must be done by any school as a precondition for solid academic achievement. Good schools will be safe and drug-free places. They will graduate young adults who are ready for the workplace as well as for further education. But the only priority Washington should worry about is academics. It should worry about this a lot, make sure all of its programs aim towards that end, and eliminate all incentives and practices that distract or confuse schools in their pursuit of that end.

2. Once national priorities are set, who should be entrusted with money and control to ensure that we reach them?

There are four obvious options here. Congress can send money and power to federal agencies, to states, to local school districts, or straight to parents. How should it decide? Whom should it trust to do right by children?

Much of the power today is vested in federal bureaucrats, as it has been since 1965. In 1965, this seemed to make sense. "National experts" were revered. States and communities seemed like "part of the problem." The country's leading education problems—a lack of supply and equity—could be tackled by distant policymakers and the movement of dollars. But the world has changed since 1965. A very different problem—the quality gap—is now the issue. Federal bureaucrats have lost their Olympian detachment and become protectors of "their" categorical programs. Many states and some communities have become education innovators and zealous reformers. At a time when many American institutions are pushing problem-solving power closer to the problems themselves, strong control at the national level seems out of step. It also seems ineffective.

That doesn't mean there is no role for Uncle Sam. Most people agree, for example, that he has done a decent job of gathering data and assessing student achievement. Especially if states and communities are to make most important decisions in education (more below), an independent audit of their results is vital. Washington—and perhaps only Washington—should play this role.

What about local school districts? They have traditionally been the federal government's partners in implementing education policy—especially through the Title I program. Can they be expected to take the reform ball and run with it? The historical record is not encouraging. Though today there is welcome movement in some districts, for the most part these local monopolies have worked to block most major education reforms. The bolder the reform, the more vigorous the blocking. Thus many have resisted external standards and accountability and almost all have fought charter schools and other forms of parental choice. As for their

federal funds, many local agencies have become "little more than colonies peopled by federal program administrators," Paul Hill writes. Fiefdoms within school district bureaucracies battle over money that really belongs to the kids.

What about the states? There is no doubt that they possess the primary constitutional authority for education, and that many now benefit from reform-minded governors dedicated to improving their schools. These governors have pushed through an impressive list of reforms in the past several years. Almost all states have some form of academic standards and assessments (though many of these aren't very good). Accountability is becoming a reality at the state level: according to Education Week's *Quality Counts*, thirty-six states now publish "report cards" on local schools, nineteen identify low-performing schools, sixteen have the power to take over, close, or reconstitute failing schools, and fourteen states reward high-performing schools with extra resources. Thirty-five states have charter-school laws, and other types of public-school choice are spreading. While many states have a long way to go—and many state education departments are calcified bureaucracies in their own right—their school reform zest is palpable.

Apart from special education, current federal policy mistrusts parents—especially poor parents—and doesn't consider them competent to make important decisions for their children.

What about parents? Though they play a crucial role in federal *higher* education policy, which is fundamentally student-centered and responsive to family decisions, they have no place in the important decisions about federal K-12 programs. To be sure, some statutes pay lip service to "involving parents" in various ways. But they have never served as much more than advisors. Children have been placed in federal programs such as Title I without the consent (and often without even the knowledge) of their guardians. Students with Spanish surnames may be registered for federally funded bilingual classes designed to increase their literacy in both English and Spanish regardless of whether their parents want them to increase their Spanish literacy (and, in some cases, even when the youngsters are not Spanish-speakers). Low income students may be "pulled-out" of class and given special instruction in math or reading by a classroom aide who may or may not have a college degree. Dissatisfied parents have had little recourse, other than to petition their school or their local school board. Apart from special education (where motivated parents can have a great deal of say), current federal policy mistrusts parents—especially poor parents—and doesn't consider them competent to make important decisions for their children.

Dozens of school choice programs of various kinds have, however, shown that parents—including low income, minority, and immigrant parents—want educational options and can make reasonable decisions for their children. A Hudson Institute study found that most charter-school parents choose their school for sound educational reasons. Studies of choice programs in New York, Washington, and Dayton, Ohio are yielding similar findings. Parents are, of course, ultimately responsible for the well-being of their children. Shouldn't they be trusted to make important education decisions for them? Does Washington have any business excluding them?

Of these four possible levels of power over decisions and control over money (federal agencies, states, local districts, and parents), we view states and parents as those most likely in today's context to make wise education decisions on behalf of children. Constitutional authority and much of the energy for change are to be found in the states, especially in their governors' offices. Federal policy should reinforce and strengthen them in their reform efforts. Federal money should flow to the states—wherever possible to the governors—and any strings getting in their way should be snipped. At the same time, programs should be held accountable to parents through the levers of choice and parental consent.

3. Should accountability be based on inputs, services and compliance with rules, or on academic performance and customer satisfaction?

In a compliance-driven model, states or districts must demonstrate that they are spending federal program dollars only for approved purposes and specified student populations. Accountability is tied to inputs and services. The primary burden that Washington places on SEAs and LEAs is to demonstrate that they have followed all the rules and procedures and spent all their federal dollars on federally approved activities.

A completely different conception of accountability would hold states and communities to account for the results that the money purchased. As in a charter school, they would enjoy much greater autonomy and decision-making power, but would be required to show stronger academic outcomes.

Today many states and communities complain about being snarled in federal red tape. "[N]ew programs come with reams of new federal reporting requirements and mandates that require more and more of the time of your teachers, principals, and superintendents," Lisa Keegan writes. This is certainly how Title I has worked for more than three decades, despite various efforts to simplify it.

Other programs are neither fish nor fowl. Many distribute funds to states to pursue specific goals—reducing drug use, for instance, or boosting teacher quality—but without many rules to guide how the funds are spent. These programs resemble miniature block grants in all ways but one: there is no true accountability mechanism, no way for Washington to ensure that the funds yielded results. In the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, for example, schools can spend their funds on a wide range of activities so long as these display some remote connection to the possibility of discouraging drug use (or violence) among students. Such loose requirements mean that program funds have been spent on everything from giant toothbrushes (presumably to teach students about dental hygiene) to entertainment guides for non-alcoholic parties.

How should such programs be reconstructed? Either turn them into true categorical programs and specify in detail just how the funds must be spent, or else back off and give states and communities true freedom while insisting on demonstrable results.

From Principles to Action

In this essay, we've described the basic problem with federal education policy: it is based on antiquated assumptions and does not target today's most urgent needs. We've noted the opportunity afforded by the upcoming ESEA reauthorization to recast the federal role. Finally, we've posed three big questions and offered our best answers. These answers lead us to a few core principles to guide the reauthorization process:

1. High academic achievement should be a top national priority—and Washington's only educational priority.
2. States and parents should be empowered to make important education decisions.
3. Accountability should be based on academic results.

What would these principles look like turned into action?

The most obvious way to focus Washington's efforts on one big priority is to consolidate all the myriad federal programs other than Title I into a single big program. Instead of pulling states in many directions with dribs and drabs of dollars, federal education policy would stand for one thing and one thing only—academic achievement. Uncle Sam would put all his money where his mouth is.

Empowering states to make important education decisions for themselves meshes easily with the idea of making one big federal education program out of many. All ESEA program funding (save for Title I) should be entrusted to the states in the most flexible way possible—a single big block grant—so that governors and legislators can decide what is most needed to boost learning levels in their states. The dollars now being spent on wide ranging purposes could be used for education reform and innovation according to state priorities.

What about empowering parents to make important education decisions? That's where Title I comes in, because the parents who most need empowering are the parents of the disadvantaged children whom Title I was created to serve. It's those children who are trapped in unacceptable schools and subjected to faddish interventions. Making it possible for their parents to choose the best path to their academic achievement is an important strategy for federal education policy.

The success of results-based accountability hinges on the existence of good measures of academic results.

How to empower these parents? By insisting that Title I funds follow children to the school or education provider of their choice—be it the neighborhood school, a public school across town, a private school, a tutoring company, an after-school program, or a summer program. Instead of funding school districts, the federal government would fund children, much as Pell grants do for higher education. All poor kids would have funds "strapped to their backs." And we say ALL poor kids, because we favor the idea of expanding Title I funding to serve all eligible youngsters so long as the aid is truly portable, child by child and school by school.

Once we've focused federal policy on one goal and entrusted states and parents with the power to make important decisions, basing accountability on results is not difficult. Congress can hold states accountable for their academic results by requiring that they participate in state-level NAEP. And to ensure that no population is overlooked, we should demand that data be published for student populations previously served by the old categorical programs (e.g., low income youngsters, students with limited proficiency in English, etc.) States that make significant progress on NAEP can be rewarded by an addition to their block grant. Those that fail to make progress after a reasonable time should be "punished" by having their funds reduced.

The success of results-based accountability hinges on the existence of good measures of academic results. Congress can make certain that there are, and send a signal that academic achievement is a top national priority, by ensuring that the National Assessment is free from interest group meddling and has the resources to provide timely information on our nation's (and the states') progress in all core academic subjects.

A Grand Bargain

This proposal—entrusting all ESEA funds to states except for Title I funds, which are "strapped to the backs of poor children," and ensuring that NAEP is strong and independent—embodies the principles that should guide the reauthorization process. But while we have little doubt that it would move the nation in the right direction, we also understand that it may not be embraced in the current political climate. Bold change in any direction is only possible in federal education policy today if bipartisan consensus emerges behind it. That's why incremental "tweaking" is the likeliest—albeit worst—course of action on Capitol Hill in the next two years. So let us ask: is it possible to imagine a bold and desirable reform scenario that could elicit bipartisan support?

It's at least imaginable that a "grand bargain" could be struck between left and right, a grand bargain that would move all of us past our various ideological limits and fundamentally improve the current education system.

It's at least imaginable that a "grand bargain" could be struck between left and right, between Democrats and Republicans, with respect to ESEA reauthorization, a grand bargain that would move all of us past our various ideological limits and fundamentally improve the current education system. For any such thing to happen, of course, each side would have to gain some objectives that it deems highly desirable, while conceding some positions that it might never have dreamed it would yield on. What might such a bargain look like?

1. *Turn Title I into a "portable entitlement" and fully fund it.* Diane Ravitch has written persuasively that Title I dollars should follow the child to the school of his or her choice. This will only work well if the program becomes a (real or virtual) entitlement such that it aids every eligible student. Today, Title I funds are neither universal nor portable; many eligible youngsters receive no Title I services from their districts, and those who do cannot count on having the services (or funds) follow them if they change schools. A "portable entitlement," therefore, would be good for poor children in two ways: it would aid them all, and it would aid them in the school of their

choice. In political terms, it would achieve a long sought liberal objective—universal coverage of poor youngsters with compensatory services from a fully-funded Title I program; and a central conservative goal as well—making Title I foster rather than retard school choice. (How extensive those choices are might be left to state constitutions and legislatures to determine.[17] States would also have to shoulder responsibility—possibly including a "mini-NAEP" test available for schools and individual children—for monitoring academic performance by students and schools.)

2. *Give governors broad waiver authority tied to NAEP.* Keep the other (i.e., non-Title I) categorical programs on the books in their present, or improved, forms but give governors the right to consolidate them into flexible packages if they choose. There is vast enthusiasm on Capitol Hill for Ed-Flex, a program which gives states some flexibility in the way they administer federal education programs. Congress may extend Ed-Flex to the fifty states, but Ed-Flex doesn't go nearly far enough. Congress should create a Super Ed-Flex that would allow a state to take some or all of its federal education dollars and use them for purposes of its own devising, free of red tape, in order to meet the state's reform priorities. In return, Super Ed-Flex states must participate in NAEP and must show academic progress (including progress by disadvantaged kids, LEP students, etc.) or risk losing some or all of its federal funds.

These two simple proposals would transform federal education policy—and enhance the school reform revolution currently underway in the land. Great political courage—on all sides—will be required to get them enacted. But perhaps it is possible. Americans are anxious for better schools. Politicians on left and right are promising results. Much is on the line. But talk of bipartisanship on education is also in the wind. As the millennium comes to a close, can we find common ground? Can we step out of thirty-four years of tired thinking and incremental tinkering with programs that have long failed our children? Can we make education policy with those kids in mind, instead of adult interest groups and political gamesmanship? We're far from sanguine about this, but we're cautiously optimistic.

---

1 Diane Ravitch, in this volume.

2 Diane Ravitch, in this volume (math and science scores). NAEP reading scores were released by the National Assessment Governing Board on February 10, 1998.

3 Diane Ravitch, in this volume.

4 Paul Hill, in this volume.

5 John Engler, in this volume.

6 William Moloney and Richard Elmer, in this volume

7 Lisa Graham Keegan, in this volume.

8 Diane Ravitch, in this volume.

9 Michael J. Puma, et. al., *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes* (Cambridge MA: Abt Associates, 1997), 52.

10 Ralph Frammolino, "Title I's $118 Billion Fails to Close Gap," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 January 1999.

11 Stanley Pogrow, in this volume.

12 Diane Ravitch, in this volume.

13 John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom, in this volume

14 Carlotta C. Joyner, "Safe and Drug-Free Schools—Balancing Accountability with State and Local Flexibility" (Washington DC: General Accounting Office, 10 October 1997). Cited by Matt Rees in this volume.

15 Paul Hill, in this volume.

16 William Galston, National Public Radio Weekend Sunday, Washington DC, 8 November 1998.

17 States might extend these choices only to the public schools, or to charter schools and magnets. Some, however, may opt to include private schools, after school and summer programs, and programs managed by private firms.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Because the political cultures and constitutional limits are so varied from state to state, it would be unacceptable for federal police to try to override them. But ESEA should stipulate that eligible children must be afforded the widest possible array of options.

Title I: Despite the Best of Intentions

Tyce Palmaffy

Enacted in 1965 to redress the educational disadvantages of poor students, Title I has evolved into a complex, hybrid program that is not fulfilling its mission. It has failed to narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged and advantaged students. Its tortuous rules and regulations seek to ensure that funds benefit their intended recipients but have created perverse incentives at the local level and a substandard education for the most at-risk students. This paper documents the history of Title I and explains how we arrived at today's version. It identifies weaknesses in the current structure and suggests that funds should be made portable to empower parents to make decisions about their children's education and create accountability mechanisms that focus on student achievement.

Introduction

"No law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America."

—*Lyndon Johnson, April 11, 1965, on signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.*[1]

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 is the centerpiece of the federal role in education. Its annual appropriation of $8 billion accounts for nearly a quarter of the federal Department of Education's yearly budget, making it by far the largest source of federal aid to elementary and secondary schools. During the past three decades, it has sent more than $100 billion to local school districts with an ambitious mandate attached: to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Most Title I funds—about $7.3 billion in 1998—flow directly to local schools, where they are used to provide extra help to low-achieving students. These dollars support various activities, from tutoring to computer-assisted learning to health and counseling programs to the promotion of parental involvement. The rest of the Title I appropriation sustains smaller categorical programs to aid migrant children, neglected and delinquent children, and the Even Start family literacy program. This report deals solely with the large general aid program.

It has four sections:

The first section outlines the history of Title I, including the legislative debates that surrounded its passage, the subsequent attempts to regulate the use of Title I funds, and its slow march from a program concerned only with fiscal compliance to one that seeks to foster education reform.

The next section reviews the research on Title I's effects, and evaluates the claims that Title I is partially responsible for the improved educational achievement of minorities during the past three decades.

The third section examines the structure of Title I: how the funds are distributed and what programs they support. As the states have come to play a larger role in Title I reform, their success in doing so is reviewed as well. Case studies from Texas and its highest-performing urban district, the Ysleta school district in El Paso, are used to illustrate potential models for Title I reform.

The final section argues that while nearly everyone agrees with the purposes of Title I, the program's current trajectory will never produce the kinds of fundamental changes that poorly-performing schools most need. Recommendations for changing it follow.

Three Decades of Frustration

During the past decade, Title I has become far more ambitious. Originally just a loosely regulated source of extra money for high poverty schools and districts, Title I now seeks to stir change at the state level. The 1994 reauthorization required states to embark on "systemic reform," a philosophy of education reform that has captured the imaginations of liberals and conservatives alike.[2] It entails developing curriculum standards that outline what students should learn; creating statewide assessments that test students' knowledge of the curriculum standards; and setting performance standards that define several levels of achievement on the tests.

These reforms, which began as state initiatives during the 1980s, have become the cornerstone of federal education policy in the 1990s. Standards and testing were heavily promoted by the Bush administration as part of its America 2000 campaign, and the Clinton administration wrote some of the principles of "systemic reform" into law with its Goals 2000 legislation. The administration in fact regarded the 1994 reauthorization of Title I as an opportunity to align the program with the reform framework established by Goals 2000.[3]

Several indicting assumptions underlie the "systemic reform" movement and, by extension, the new direction of Title I: that without state standards, many of those schools serving low income and minority students will continue to set far lower academic expectations than those serving wealthier students; that without state assessments, they will neglect to track whether students are achieving at high levels; and that without a public accountability system, they will not offer a high quality education.

That such a vocal supporter of public education as the Clinton administration would endorse these assumptions is remarkable enough. But what is truly striking is how eager Title I's long time advocates, the driving force behind its original design, have been to abandon the program's traditional respect for local autonomy.

This switch reflects advocates' increasing frustration over Title I's failure to close the achievement gap between poor and well-to-do students, as its founders thought it would. Surprisingly little of this frustration is directed at the federal government itself. For the most part, program advocates view Title I's failure as a local failure; the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, a liberal advocacy group devoted to Title I reform, released a report in Fall 1998 decrying "the widespread propensity of school officials to maintain and tolerate a permanent underclass of low-achieving students who are disproportionately poor and minority."[4] How advocates came to be so exasperated with the nation's education establishment is deeply rooted in Title I's history—most deeply in the choices that local educators have made over time in reaction to federal attempts to ensure the program's fiscal and academic accountability.

The Great Society

Before 1965, both the funding and provision of education were almost solely local concerns. Federal involvement was sparse and even the states had only a limited role: setting minimum standards, certifying teachers, requiring certain courses such as state history, etc. Though this relatively unplanned, unregulated system of neighborhood schools and mostly autonomous districts allowed localities to determine their own education priorities, it also led to enormous interstate and intrastate disparities in quality and resources. The tradition of funding schools with local property taxes left high poverty areas with scarce money for education, and racial segregation saddled many minority students with a substandard education.[5]

. . . what is truly striking is how eager Title I's long time advocates, the driving force behind its original design, have been to abandon the program's traditional respect for local autonomy.

The civil rights movement and the War on Poverty would address these inequities, but it was the events of the Cold War that broke the country's longstanding resistance to federal aid to education. In particular, the 1957 launching of the Soviet spacecraft Sputnik heightened fears that American education was inadequate to cope with the technological needs of the modern era. Thus education became not only a concern of parents and communities, but also a matter of national security. Congress soon passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which provided funds for science, math, and foreign language education.

Reformers of the day regarded NDEA not just as a means to provide schools with more money but as a major symbolic breakthrough. In securing federal funds for local education expenditures, they had overcome the obstacles that had blocked past efforts to aid education. They had assuaged, for the moment at least, conservative fears of federal control over education, the demands of religious groups that private schools be aided as well, and the views of state and local educators that they, not the federal government, should decide how education dollars are spent.[6]

Having cleared the road for federal funds to flow to schools, interest groups pushed for more. Whereas NDEA had provided "categorical" aid for the teaching of certain subjects and focused on the nation's best and brightest, organizations such as the National Education Association sought more general aid for teacher salaries, school construction, and so on. Representative Carl Perkins of Kentucky, who introduced several education bills during the 1960s, reflected their perspective best in Congress. He thought the federal government needed to be involved in public education because of its superior revenue-raising powers, especially its ability to tap income and corporate taxes for school spending.[7] Reformers also believed that the federal government could help equalize funding between states and districts, and that its influence would help to professionalize education by bringing research dollars and expertise into the field.[8] The booming economy of the 1960s and the baby-boom-induced rise in the school age population bolstered the view that the U.S. had both the means and the need to devote more federal resources to education.

Efforts at passing legislation during the Kennedy administration foundered in Congress. But Lyndon Johnson's landslide reelection in 1964 and the ascendance of strong Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate put in place a corps of politicians committed to federal aid to education. Many of them shared Johnson's belief that education could lift children out of poverty if their schools had the resources to give them extra help. And by the mid-1960s, the link between poverty and low academic achievement was well-established.[9] So instead of providing the general aid that education interest groups had sought, Johnson and his congressional allies moved to target federal funds to disadvantaged children. Despite some roadblocks, such as the continued opposition of Catholic and other religious groups to any federal education aid that failed to include private schools, they soon succeeded.[10] In 1965, the ESEA easily passed Congress with five-sixths of the funds (nearly $1 billion) allocated to the compensatory program set up under Title I.[11] Its ambitious purpose was to eliminate the achievement gap between wealthy and poor children.

Free Money

To satisfy conservatives and educators who continued to worry about too much federal intrusion into the workings of what were still primarily local institutions, Title I funds initially came with few strings attached. In the legislation's vague terms, the money was given to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to design programs of "sufficient size, scope, and quality" to meet the "special educational needs" of disadvantaged children.[12] After designing such programs, LEAs submitted their plans to their respective State Education Agencies (SEAs) for approval. The SEAs had to give the federal Department of Health, Welfare, and Education "assurance" that the requirements of the legislation were being met by local districts, but the SEAs were still immature organizations, unaccustomed to strictly regulating local programs. And they received little guidance from federal regulators. In practice, the LEAs pretty much ran their programs as they saw fit.[13]

Title I funds were distributed to districts based on the number of children living in poverty and the state's average per-pupil spending. From the start, this formula was the most hotly debat-

ed part of the legislation. By basing Title I grants on a nationwide formula instead of allowing the states to distribute the funds, Congress sought to ensure that the funds would reach the intended children. But using a state's per-pupil spending as a factor tended to favor wealthy states that spent more on education, and several congressmen unsuccessfully tried to base the grants solely on the incidence of poverty. Congressmen also naturally tried to secure as much money for their districts as possible. Thus the final legislation stipulated that only 3 percent of a district's children needed to be eligible for funding in order for the district to receive a grant—with the result that Title I funds were thinly distributed to nearly every school district in the country.

Early reviews of the program found that many districts considered Title I funds to be general aid, and treated them as such. Stories filtered out about schools using Title I money to build swimming pools and provide services to ineligible children.[14] The reasons were fairly predictable. Congress had suddenly charged an understaffed, inexperienced U.S. Office of Education with the responsibility of regulating and monitoring a program that affected nearly every school district in the country—a job it was not yet ready for. Any power the federal office might have had to ensure that local districts complied with the law was further curbed by the tradition of local control in education. The office certainly could not revoke misused funds or otherwise punish districts for lax administration of the program.[15]

Early reviews of the program found that many districts considered Title I funds to be general aid, and treated them as such.

The legislation also assumed that educators knew how to create effective compensatory programs, and that Title I would enable them to effectively serve the students whom they had ill-served in the past.[16] Neither turned out to be true. With no special compensatory programs in mind, no competition for the funding, and little guidance on how to spend the money, Title I became exactly what it was not supposed to be: just another revenue source for schools.

Tightening the Federal Clamp

In the early 1970s, civil rights groups and legislators began to call for a tightening of federal regulations to ensure that Title I funds were being spent on eligible children. In response, federal regulators developed stricter rules governing program expenditures, and allowed local districts to use Title I funds to pay administrative personnel whose main function would be to know the rules and enforce them. Federal officials established relationships with these program managers, inviting them to conferences and providing them with program updates, and thus created a cadre of local Title I administrators who were supposed to play watchdog and lessen the need for federal oversight.[17] They were backed up and, to some degree, kept on their toes, by occasional federal audits.

The logic undergirding this more stringent enforcement seemed airtight: if the funds were not being spent on disadvantaged children, why would we expect the program to boost their achievement? Yet the regulations promulgated during the 1970s and the reaction of local districts to them would become Title I's defining feature—and a frequent object of scorn.

With each succeeding reauthorization of the legislation—in 1968, 1970, 1974, and 1978—came new guidelines and requirements for the receipt and use of Title I funds. Conceptually, most of them seemed sensible. "Maintenance of effort" guidelines required that a district's revenues from local and state sources not dip below the previous year's level. In other words, Title I funds were to augment preexisting state and local funds, not to enable states and localities to lower taxes. "Comparability" guidelines required that, within a district, each school receive the same resources before Title I was added in. The underlying principle was that Title I should supplement the education of disadvantaged kids, not give them what was already available to better-off children. Perhaps the best-known Title I provision, "supplement, not supplant," required that the federal dollars not be used to pay for services otherwise given to kids or required by states. For instance, if a state established a cap on first-grade class sizes, Title I funds could only be used to go below the cap, not to reach it. The "excess cost" provision further clarified "supplement, not supplant" by mandating that Title I funds only be used to pay the additional costs of supplementary services. For instance, only that part of a teacher's salary that corresponds to the amount of time she spends teaching Title I kids may be paid for with Title I funds.[18] In extreme cases, Title I teachers were not allowed to supervise children in the playground or hallways because they would be working with some ineligible children.[19]

Other regulations required districts to spend a certain amount of funds on parental involvement activities, to serve high poverty schools before low poverty ones, to conduct "needs assessments" that identified educationally disadvantaged children, and to design programs to meet their needs. The spirit of these regulations was to direct Title I funding toward poor children, a goal consonant with the original legislation's intent. And, for the most part, the new regulations worked—at least in terms of ensuring that the money went where it was supposed to. Post-1975 studies of Title I found that an influx of Title I funds to districts produced a dollar-for-dollar increase in total spending.[20] Meanwhile, the percentage of kids served by Title I who were not low achievers—in other words, kids who did not need the program—dropped dramatically.[21]

Bad Choices

On the academic side of the ledger, however, schools now tended to make decisions based not on their educational value but on their ability to meet audit requirements. In particular, to satisfy the "supplement, not supplant" rule, educators began pulling children out of their regular classrooms to receive reading or math instruction from a Title I teacher or aide. The purpose was to create a clear "audit trail": if Title I students were taught separately by Title I staff using materials purchased with Title I money, Title I funds were clearly not being used to give services to ineligible children. By 1976, some 70 percent of Title I children received instruction in this manner.[22]

This practice came under fire from both educators and policymakers. They claimed that "pull-out programs," as they came to be called, needlessly stigmatized some children as Title I kids. Moreover, pull-outs were often staffed by instructional aides, not certified teachers. They

tended to run drill-and-practice sessions that concentrated on basic skills instruction in reading and math—using a curriculum that was rarely aligned with the one used in the regular classroom. So children were spirited away from their trained teachers during class time, placed with poorly trained Title I aides who often had no credential higher than a high-school diploma, and given instruction in a separate curriculum with different books and classwork. Hardly anyone thought this was sound educational practice.

Indeed, by the mid-1970s, top policymakers were complaining that pull-outs left untouched the regular classrooms that had failed poor children in the first place. Worse, the creation of a separate Title I administrative and instructional structure engendered a feeling among many teachers and administrators that Title I kids were no longer their responsibility.[23] This led Marshall Smith, now U.S. Undersecretary of Education, and historian Carl Kaestle to write in 1982, "After almost two decades of intervention, the Title I program stands primarily as a symbol of national concern for the poor rather than as a viable response to their needs."[24]

Nearly every year since the program's inception saw its funding increase, and every half-decade or so Congress reauthorized the program by wide margins.

What was particularly strange was the extent to which local educators adopted similar policies and programs in response to federal regulations—as if federal authorities had imposed the pull-out design on every school and district. Some advocates even claimed that this was indeed the case. Valena Plisko, a program evaluation official in the U.S. Department of Education, and Marshall Smith wrote in 1995 that Title I regulations had caused local schools to focus on "easily monitored, low-level, basic skills instruction that often resulted in a double deficit of lost regular classroom time and less challenging instruction."[25]

But federal regulations never required or even recommended pull-outs, and it was a local choice to engage in basic skills instruction. Local schools could have chosen to run before- or after-school programs instead of taking time out of the regular school day for Title I services. They could have used Title I funds to extend the school year or school day, or to set up a summer school program. They could have promoted collaborative relationships between Title I staff and regular teachers, so as to align the curricula and tailor services to each child. They could have provided an enriched curriculum instead of "low level" instruction. All of these options were clearly permitted under Title I's regulations.

In the 1980s, for instance, Dade County, Florida, ran an after-school Title I program to which teachers had to apply. Only the district's best teachers were selected, making it something of an honor to be named a Title I teacher.[26] It was the best of both worlds: federal auditors were pleased, and Title I kids received instruction from highly qualified teachers without missing any regular classroom time. Why, one might ask, were programs like Dade County's so rare? As far as anyone can tell, pull-outs simply offered the path of least resistance: children were already in school from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., so that's when Title I services were given. Convenience, in short, had trumped efficacy.

Continued Disappointments

By the late 1970s, Title I advocates inside and outside the federal Office of Education were fairly satisfied that the money was reaching its intended recipients. But as of yet there was hardly any evidence that Title I was making a difference in student achievement, let alone closing the achievement gap. (See the penultimate section of this report for a review of the research literature on Title I.) In addition, well-respected scholars such as Christopher Jencks and James Coleman had become extremely pessimistic about compensatory education's ability to overcome the effects of family poverty and social breakdown.[27]

Yet Title I continued to lead a charmed life in Congress. Nearly every year since the program's inception saw its funding increase, and every half-decade or so Congress reauthorized the program by wide margins. In 1981, its name was changed to Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, but it managed to escape the Reagan administration's attempts to send federal funds to the states in block grants. The 1981 reauthorization did introduce some deregulation in response to the complaints of educators, but by now Title I was a mature program whose administrators at the local level had finally learned what they could and could not do. They weren't about to change and risk failing a federal audit.

Frustration with the program's seeming ineffectiveness continued to mount though. Critics' main concern was still that Title I's separation from what happened in the regular classroom did nothing to promote change in the place where students spent the bulk of their time. In a 1986 letter to Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, California State Superintendent of Education Bill Honig wrote, "The isolation of Chapter 1 students and service providers undermines efforts to attain academic excellence in school. Planning for the use of Chapter 1 funds should be at the school level and constitute an integral part of the schools' total program."[28] Congress responded by creating the "schoolwide" option. Originally limited to schools with over 75 percent of their children living in poverty, schoolwide Title I allowed eligible schools to spend their federal funds on general improvement. They no longer had to trace the dollars to individual children, obviating the perceived need for pull-outs. However, until the 1988 reauthorization, districts had to provide matching funds for any previously ineligible children who were now being served in a schoolwide program, which kept many schools from switching to such a program.

Program Improvement

The 1988 reauthorization marked a turning point. Besides encouraging schoolwide programs by doing away with the matching funds requirement, Congress finally introduced a small measure of academic accountability into the program. Title I had always required local districts to test their students and report the findings to their respective state agencies. But there had never been any consequences for poor performance. Financial compliance had historically been far more important than the program's effectiveness.

Consequences would now come in the form of what Congress termed "program improvement." States were required to designate certain schools for "program improvement" based

on their annual progress as measured by standardized test scores. The process of gauging progress went like this: local districts reported test scores in terms of Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs). NCEs essentially indicate how a student measures up against his peers, i.e., a student who scores at the 50th percentile did better than half the population of test takers. A student who scores at the 50th percentile two years in a row would have gained a year's worth of knowledge, but his relative standing would not have changed. His progress would thus be zero. Congress left it to states to decide how much progress was necessary to avoid being marked for program improvement. Most set a very low standard.[29]

Being tapped for program improvement merely meant that a school had to work with parents, the community, and the local district to devise a plan for increasing achievement. Yet schools viewed it as punishment for poor performance. "If you designate someone for program improvement," says long time congressional aide John Jennings, now director of the Center for Education Policy, "you're publicly saying they've failed." So schools tried to avoid program improvement at all costs.

The 1994 reauthorization of Title I can be seen as an effort to align Title I with the accountability movement, and to use federal leverage to push it along.

This should have meant strengthening the curriculum and motivating the school staff to work tirelessly toward common goals. But instead it led to perverse decision making. For instance, educators generally recognize that it is more effective to provide quality instruction in the early grades than to provide remedial instruction later. But students ordinarily weren't tested in kindergarten and first grade. So, according to Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden of Johns Hopkins University, schools focused their resources on later grades, when, for Title I monitoring purposes, progress mattered.[30] In fact, only 8 percent of Title I children were in preschool or kindergarten programs in 1988-89.[31] The program improvement guidelines also rewarded schools for holding students back because they would take the same test twice and record enormous gains.[32] These strange incentives and the schooling decisions that followed led Success for All co-founders Slavin and Madden to write, with welcome honesty, "The most important thing we have learned after 15 years of 'accountability' in education is that high-stakes assessments do in fact drive instruction and other school practices but that if schools can find an easier way to affect assessments than to do a better job of teaching, they will often do so."[33]

Fumbling Toward Accountability

By the spring of 1992, 20 percent of Title I schools were in some stage of program improvement.[34] But hardly anyone thought this was the answer to Title I's problems. Poorly designed incentives, natural year-to-year fluctuations in standardized test scores, and the tendency of states to set low standards all made program improvement an inconsistent, ineffectual process. It certainly would not lead to the wholesale changes that Title I's advocates and critics sought. A burgeoning reform movement, however, held more promise.

It began in Charlottesville, Virginia, where President Bush gathered the nation's governors for an education summit in 1989. There they established six National Education Goals to be met by the year 2000. More broadly, they committed themselves to so-called standards-based

reform. The idea was to have states establish curriculum guidelines for what students should learn at each level of schooling, giving schools a clear roadmap and goals to meet along the way. In the summit's aftermath, what has widely been termed the "accountability" movement began percolating in the states. Several states moved to develop curriculum standards and new assessments. At the federal level, these ideas were eventually represented by the Goals 2000 legislation, a program of competitive grants that encourages and funds the development of state standards and local reforms.

The 1994 reauthorization of Title I can be seen as an effort to align Title I with the accountability movement, and to use federal leverage to push it along. It required states to develop aligned curriculum standards and assessments that all students are to be held to. The new assessments are to replace the norm-referenced tests (that measure how students compare to one another) with criterion-referenced tests that measure how much of the curriculum a student has actually mastered. Other important provisions required local schools to set aside a portion of their funds for teacher training (or, in the argot of educators, "professional development") and parent involvement activities.

The Department of Education was also given broader authority to waive Title I regulations, giving states and localities more flexibility in running the program. The cutoff for exercising the schoolwide option was lowered to 50 percent of students living in poverty. More schools could thus use Title I money for general improvement, in the hopes that state accountability systems would force them to show results.

The expansion of schoolwide programs, and the requirement that states begin to develop standards and tests, reflect the desire among Title I advocates that the program be integral to school reform, not just a set of supplementary services. They had also grown increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress schools had shown, and with the low expectations they had continually set for poor and minority children. The Commission on Chapter 1, an influential group of liberal Title I advocates formed in anticipation of the 1994 reauthorization, wrote in 1992 that "no matter how wonderful the staff in special programs or how terrific their materials and equipment, they cannot compensate in 25 minutes per day for the effects of watered-down instruction the rest of the school day and school year. And watered-down instruction is precisely what most poor children get."[35]

For now, the philosophical shift undergirding these reforms is more important than the reforms themselves. For decades, market-minded reformers had argued that educators tended to focus more on process than results—on how money was spent rather than whether the money had produced a measurable rise in achievement. In principle, at least, the 1994 Title I reforms represented an embrace of this critique.

Research on Title I

The body of research on Title I's effectiveness encompasses hundreds of local and state evaluations, several scholarly attempts to make sense of those evaluations, and two long-term studies funded by the U.S. Department of Education. These research findings, as Title I

advocates insist, should not be the only criterion by which we judge the program. But after spending upwards of $100 billion to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and others, it is not unreasonable to ask what has been accomplished. Only well-designed studies of program efficacy can tell us that.

The most important evidence comes from the two federally funded studies, *Sustaining Effects* and *Prospects*. Beginning in 1976 and continuing for three years, the *Sustaining Effects* study collected data on 120,000 students in over 300 elementary schools. Its key finding was that the achievement levels of Title I students rose at the same rate as those of ineligible students; the achievement gap neither widened nor narrowed.[36]

The study also found that only moderately low-achieving students seemed to benefit from Title I; the program did not help children who began at the bottom of the achievement curve. And by the time Title I students had reached junior high, any academic gains relative to their more advantaged peers had disappeared—a phenomenon researchers term the "fade-out effect."[37] Further research has suggested that *Sustaining Effects* may even have overestimated students' early gains by pre-testing children in the fall and delivering the post-test in the spring. Student achievement tends to drop during the summer months, particularly for disadvantaged youngsters, necessitating fall-to-fall or spring-to-spring testing for a reliable measure of annual achievement gains.[38] Regardless, it was clear by the early 1980s that Title I was having, at best, a marginal effect on student achievement.

Prospects found that Title I students started school well behind their peers and failed to narrow that initial achievement gap over time.

That depressing conclusion seemed to corroborate the developing consensus among scholars that there was little schools could do to counteract the corrosive influence of living in impoverished conditions.[39] Adding further evidence was Stephen Mullin and Anita Summers's oft-cited review of forty-seven studies of compensatory education programs. Published at nearly the same time as *Sustaining Effects*, their review included national and local studies of both Title I-funded and other compensatory education programs. They found no link between the amount of money a program spent and how much it raised achievement. They also encountered the "fade-out effect" that *Sustaining Effects* had reported. Likewise, they found that many of the studies that reported achievement gains suffered from poor statistical methods, such as fall-to-spring testing, that tended to overstate any rise in achievement.[40] In short, compensatory education didn't seem to compensate for much of anything.

Prospecting for Gold, Finding Coal

Despite this bleak picture, the upsurge in Title I funding continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s. The structure of the program, meanwhile, did not change in any meaningful way. (The creation of "program improvement" was an important philosophical shift, but in practice it changed little about how Title I functioned.) Congress, however, was becoming increasingly interested in finding ways to make Title I more results-oriented. With that goal in mind, the 1988 reauthorization of Title I mandated a national assessment of the program that was to include a rigorous, long-term study of the program's effects on student achievement.

Known as *Prospects*, the study tracked an initial sample of 40,000 students for three years, from 1991 to 1994.

Improved statistical methods and its longitudinal nature make *Prospects* the most comprehensive and authoritative study of Title I ever undertaken. Which makes its conclusions even more depressing. *Prospects* found that Title I students started school well behind their peers and failed to narrow that initial achievement gap over time. What is more, after using sophisticated statistical techniques to adjust the results of Title I students and non-Title I students for family, school, and income differences, the conclusion was no different: the academic growth of Title I students was no faster than that of more advantaged students, leaving the achievement chasm unbridged.[41] The *Prospects* researchers also compared students' achievement in years in which they received Title I services with years in which they did not receive services. Again they found no difference in students' academic growth, leading them to write, "[T]here was no indication in the *Prospects* data that [Title I] participation improved students' educational outcomes."[42] The changes made to the program in the 1994 reauthorization were sparked in part by this finding.[43]

Nevertheless, the *Prospects* report had an important caveat. One problem inherent in any study of Title I is that students are selected for services based on certain criteria. Thus they are different from students who are ineligible for Title I funds. This is important because they may be different in ways, such as living in a single parent household or high poverty area, that tend to further hamper their academic growth. An ideal study would randomly assign students to a test group and a control group—respectively, a group of students who receive Title I services and a group who do not. That would be the two groups' only meaningful difference, allowing researchers to isolate the effects of the Title I program itself. If the Title I students achieve at a faster rate than the control group, then Title I services have added value to their educational experience.

Neither *Prospects* nor *Sustaining Effects* set up such a controlled experiment. Although both studies tried to control for the differences between Title I and non-Title I students, the fact that the differences existed still confounded the results. Thus its findings, *Prospects* notes, are only "suggestive"—there is simply no definitive way of knowing how students would have done absent the program.[44] Title I may not have narrowed the achievement gap, but we don't know how much the achievement gap may have widened *without* the program. The finding that Title I students fared no worse in years in which they did not receive Title I services, however, suggests that they would not have fallen any farther behind had they not been a part of the Title I program.

Which Numbers to Believe?

Another approach, known among social scientists as "meta-analysis," is to take the data from a series of smaller studies and statistically amass the numbers so as to draw out more meaningful results. By doing so, Geoffrey Borman and Jerome D'Agostino painted a slightly rosier picture in their 1996 review of seventeen studies spanning the history of Title I. They corroborated the "fade-out effect" and confirmed that student achievement took a few steps back

during the summer months.[45] But they also found that Title I, in a sense, had learned—that the program had become more effective over time. Another important finding was that students who received Title I help in the elementary grades out performed those who didn't receive services until middle or high school.[46] In conclusion, they wrote, "Title I alone cannot be expected to serve as the great equalizer. The results do suggest, however, that without the program, children served over the last 30 years would have fallen farther behind academically."[47]

Less rigorous attempts to demonstrate that Title I has "worked"—that it has helped to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children—have been based on data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a series of tests begun in the early 1970s and administered every two to five years. By that yardstick, Hispanic and black children (groups disproportionately served by Title I) have made substantial gains in both reading and mathematics during the past quarter century. On nearly every test, the gaps between minority students and white students decreased as well.[48] Many Title I advocates have ascribed these gains to the extra resources Title I has provided to schools over the years.[49]

A valid if unscientific case can be made that, by focusing educators on the problems of disadvantaged children, Title I sparked a cultural shift within public education.

There are problems with this interpretation, however. First, the NAEP data are not broken down by whether students receive Title I services or not. This leaves no way of validating the claim that Title I, rather than school desegregation or improved teaching methods or even better nutrition or sleeping habits, is responsible for minorities' achievement gains. Second, NAEP scores for both Hispanic and black students have suffered a significant but inexplicable decrease since the late 1980s. The result is that, with shocking uniformity, the achievement gap between minorities and white students has again widened on nearly every test and at nearly every age level in recent years. Should we hold Title I responsible for these setbacks as well as the earlier gains? Probably not, which is why decisions specific to Title I's future should be primarily informed by the data from *Prospects* and *Sustaining Effects*.

Still, it would be unfair to dismiss the argument that Title I deserves some credit for the improvements in minority achievement. A valid if unscientific case can be made that, by focusing educators on the problems of disadvantaged children, Title I sparked a cultural shift within public education. Whereas previously educators may not have seen raising minority achievement as a part of their mission, whether because of racism or low societal expectations, passage of Title I firmly established a national commitment to the education of all children. Today, in a Title I school, every teacher knows what the purpose of Title I is, and therefore it is her purpose too. Today more ink is spilled, in the pages of both liberal, mainstream, and conservative publications, on the issue of how to fix high poverty schools than ever before. To the extent that Title I helped to bring about this welcome shift, it may have had benefits that can't be measured.

Title I Today

Although the 1994 reauthorization represented a major philosophical shift, in practice the results have been mixed. Many states have been criticized for their vague, unchallenging content standards, and most states have been slow to develop the criterion-referenced tests that the law requires. The U.S. Department of Education, meanwhile, has only required states to develop content standards in two subjects—reading and math. Some Title I advocates accuse the department of merely rubber-stamping most states' Title I plans, even if they have not fully complied with the law. In terms of "accountability," the overwhelming majority of states are still using the ineffective "program improvement" process.[50]

Far more interesting than these failures, however, are the successes. Some states have designed accountability systems that seem to work, and they provide a blueprint for how other states should proceed in designing their own. In particular, Texas has had an accountability system in place since the early 1990s. Since then, scores on both its own state assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress have risen impressively. The following section describes Texas's system and uses both national statistics and anecdotes from one of Texas's most successful districts to explain how Title I functions generally—how student eligibility is determined, what schools may use Title I funds for, how a schoolwide program differs from targeted-assistance schools, etc.

Funding

The formula used to distribute Title I funds among states, districts, and schools has changed little since 1965, a fact that belies how truly controversial the formula is. On the theory that it is not so much poverty but a concentration of poverty that depresses student achievement, legislators have tried during nearly every reauthorization to adjust the formula so as to steer more funding into schools with high proportions of poor children. But these "targeting" efforts, as they are called, have met with stern resistance from Congressmen whose districts would stand to lose substantial amounts of money under alternative funding schemes. For the most part, these efforts to hew more closely to the spirit of the law have fallen victim to this reality of congressional politics, leaving the original formula largely intact.

The Title I formula distributes funds according to the number of school-age children living in poverty and each state's average per-pupil spending for elementary and secondary education. Using poverty figures from the decennial census, the Department of Education first determines the number of eligible children residing in each county. Each state's maximum Title I grant is then determined by multiplying the number of eligible children by a percentage of the state's average per-pupil spending. Each state's actual grant depends on Title I's annual appropriation. Once the states receive their grants, they take a small cut (about 1 percent) to administer the program and allocate the rest to local districts using the census poverty figures. The states have almost no discretion in making grants to districts; it must be done according to the federal formula.

Before 1994, there were just two types of Title I grants: "basic" and "concentration." "Basic" grants constitute nearly 90 percent of all Title I grants and are awarded to any district with at least ten disadvantaged children or whose total student enrollment is more than 2 percent disadvantaged. "Concentration" grants are distributed according to the same formula, but, to be eligible, a district must serve 6,500 disadvantaged children or 15 percent of its total enrollment must be disadvantaged. In reality, though, "concentration" grants are not very concentrated: nearly two-thirds of all children live in districts eligible for such grants.[51] The Clinton administration's efforts to send more Title I funds flowing through "concentration" grants failed during the 1994 reauthorization.

Between 70 and 80 percent of all Title I dollars are spent on salaries for extra staff.

Congress did, however, create two new programs under Title I: Targeted Grants and the Education Finance Incentive Program. Much like "concentration" grants, Targeted Grants provide higher per-pupil amounts to districts with high percentages or numbers of poor children. The Education Finance Incentive Program has a more ambitious agenda. It awards increasing amounts of funds to states that spend more on education relative to personal income (known as a state's "fiscal effort") and that have less variation in spending among districts (known as a state's "fiscal equity").

The intention is to encourage states both to increase their investments in education and to moderate disparities in spending between wealthy and poor districts. But only funds in excess of the 1995 appropriation level are supposed to flow through these two programs, giving states little incentive to bear the huge economic and political costs of raising general education spending and fighting protracted equalization battles. Plus Congress has yet to appropriate any money for either program.

Once Title I funds reach school districts, another set of regulations kicks in. Districts may use one of several poverty indicators to determine which schools to serve and how much funding they will receive, but most districts use the federal free- and reduced-price lunch program as a proxy for poverty. (This tends to overstate the amount of poverty in a school, further diluting Title I funds.) In the past, districts distributed funds based on a school's overall achievement instead of poverty, which tended to punish schools for doing well. That has been changed. Districts also tended to focus their funds at the elementary level; during the 1994-95 school year, 70 percent of all public elementary schools received funds, while only 30 percent of secondary schools did.[52] Since then, the number of secondary schools receiving funds has risen slightly as districts are now required to serve all schools whose student populations are more than 75 percent poor before serving any other schools. Districts must also rank their schools by poverty rate and serve them in order, regardless of the grades they contain. In terms of targeting, districts may not serve any school whose poverty rate falls below the district's average poverty rate, unless the district average and the school's rate are both above 35 percent.

What bothers Title I advocates about this system is that, in the distribution of the bulk of Title I funds, students in low poverty districts are treated the same as those in high poverty districts. The result is that Title I funds still find their way into nearly every school district and

school in the nation while some high poverty schools go unserved. In New York state, for instance, one study found that 63 percent of schools whose poverty rates ranged from 0-10 percent received Title I funding during the 1992-93 school year. Meanwhile, nearly 15 percent of the schools whose poverty rates ranged from 50-60 percent received no funds.[53] It is easy to see why: New York City's district-wide poverty rate was 59 percent in 1992-93. Any school below that rate was ineligible, whereas if located in a lower poverty district the same school would have received Title I funds.[54]

Spending

With all the regulations governing where Title I funds go, it may seem like an inflexible program. But the key to understanding Title I is to recognize that it is not really a "program" at all. It is a subsidy that targets resources on certain schools and children. Once the money arrives, there are few limitations on how schools spend it. Title I funds may be used to pay for anything from hiring a new teacher to purchasing computer software to providing childcare for parents who want to attend parental involvement events. They may be used to educate parents, to train teachers, to provide nutrition programs and social services or to pay for a school nurse. (There are some limits, such as a prohibition on paying for school construction.)

But don't mistake flexibility for simplicity. In targeted-assistance schools, in which students must still be sorted into Title I and non-Title I, there is still the burden of tracking funds to their intended recipients. That burden continues to encourage schools to rely on pullout methods that Title I advocates almost universally recognize as ineffective.

The expansion of the schoolwide option to schools where poor children make up more than half the enrollment has eased some of that burden. All students in a schoolwide Title I program are eligible, so there is no need to create an "audit trail." "You don't have to make sure that the computer you purchased is only being used by Title I kids," says Alice Davis, the El Paso, Texas-based Ysleta school district's director of compensatory programs. The overwhelming majority of Title I schools are still targeted-assistance schools, but the number of schoolwides has grown from about 3,000 in 1993 to about 16,000 now.[55] States have embraced the schoolwide option to varying degrees. New York, for instance, still had only 380 schoolwides and almost 3,000 targeted-assistance schools in 1996, whereas Texas had more than doubled its number of schoolwides and almost halved its number of targeted-assistance schools by then.[56]

Despite Title I's flexibility, there is remarkable uniformity in what schools actually use the money for. Between 70 and 80 percent of all Title I dollars are spent on salaries for extra staff.[57] Of them, about half are instructional aides, 80 percent of whom do not hold a bachelor's degree.[58] In targeted-assistance schools, Title I staff tend to tutor students in a pull-out setting for about thirty minutes a day, five times a week.[59] Schools that don't use pull-outs tend to use instructional aides to help Title I students in their classrooms. Most schoolwide programs use their additional funding to hire a few extra teachers, mostly to reduce class sizes.

One exception is the Ysleta district in El Paso. Every school there has a schoolwide Title I program. Nearly every school also uses a portion of its Title I funds to hire a home liaison/parent educator. She coordinates the school's parental involvement events and, in most of the schools, runs the parent center. There, parents can take English lessons (many Ysleta parents speak only Spanish), computer literacy classes, or volunteer their time to the school. When I visited Hillcrest Middle School one night in June, about 200 parents had gathered for a presentation on gang awareness—how to spot whether your child is becoming involved with a gang and what to do about it.

Del Norte Elementary has sunk most of its Title I money into buying hardware and software for a computer lab. The principal, Gloria Polanco-McNealy, wanted to target the school's math scores, so she purchased a math software program that students use to augment their regular class instruction. Ascarate Elementary sponsored a parent conference at which parents could attend sessions on nutrition and raising street-smart kids. "No one really taught them how to be a parent," says Nellie Morales, the school's principal. Parkland Middle School pays extra salaries to teachers for before- and after-school tutoring. Ysleta Elementary has a certified social worker who conducts home visits and helps to connect families to social service agencies. Nearly every school I visited was using a significant portion of its Title I grant to pay for teacher training and to purchase curriculum materials that are aligned with Texas's state standards.

The States' Role

Ysleta has achieved remarkable success within the past few years. From 1993 to 1998, the percentage of its students who passed the state reading tests rose from 63 to 89. In math, the percentage jumped from 41 to 86. Moreover, the achievement gap between Ysleta's white and Hispanic students has been narrowed by two-thirds. This in one of the nation's poorest congressional districts, in a school district in which 40 percent of the students enter school with limited English proficiency (LEP).

In Ysleta one can find the promise of standards-based reform, together with assessments and accountability. Earlier this decade, Texas adopted standards and, more importantly, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a yearly series of tests that almost all students must take. Schools receive one of four ratings—"exemplary," "recognized," "acceptable," or "low-performing"—based on their students' passage rates on the tests, attendance, and dropout rates. Ysleta is the first of Texas's eight largest school districts to achieve "recognized" status, meaning that at least 80 percent of all Ysleta students, as well as 80 percent of the students in each of five demographic subgroups—black, Hispanic, white, Asian, and economically disadvantaged—passed the TAAS.[60]

When Congress required states to develop standards and assessments aligned to the standards, it had Texas in mind. "If you implemented the law as written, it should look like Texas's," says a Democratic House aide.

So far, no other state has approached the breadth and rigor of Texas's accountability system. Almost all states have adopted standards, but most still use commercially available, norm-referenced tests such as the Stanford 9 or the California Achievement Test. Few states disaggregate their test scores by racial or economic groups to ensure that schools are teaching all their students. Even fewer rate their schools based on performance, an integral part of any meaningful accountability system.

It is highly doubtful whether a significant number of states will adopt a system like Texas's. Most states have tended to set low standards relative to external measures of educational achievement, such as students' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. For instance, on the NAEP's fourth-grade reading assessment, 35 percent of Wisconsin's students scored at the "proficient" level in 1994. Ninety percent of the state's students met the state's standard in reading in 1996. Georgia had 26 percent of its students score at the NAEP's "proficient" level in 1994. Yet on its own reading test, 67 percent of students met the state's standard in reading in 1996. Louisiana and South Carolina had even wider discrepancies. The setting of low standards by many states, along with the states' foot-dragging in developing assessments and accountability systems, suggest that though the 1994 reauthorization held much promise, the reality will continue to fall far short of what advocates and legislators had in mind. In fact, a thorough review of state plans and the Department of Education's regulatory guidance by the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights found that state officials "have failed to heed the call of the new law to ensure that poor and minority children reap the benefits of standards-based reform."[61]

Conclusion

To understand this skepticism about the "accountability" movement's potential, remember Title I's history:

When early evaluations found that local schools were treating Title I funds as merely general aid and, in many cases, failing to offer poor children any additional services, federal legislators tightened the regulations. In response, schools began pulling children out of class to receive remedial instruction in reading and math—often from instructional aides, not qualified teachers. Despite strenuous criticism from nearly all quarters and obvious alternatives such as after-school and summer school programs, the practice of pull-outs continued for more than two decades and only recently has begun to fall out of favor. Congress's first attempt to bring a measure of accountability to the program, in the form of "program improvement," again caused local schools to adopt unsound practices that shielded them from criticism but did nothing to cure their problems. Today, four years after the last reauthorization, few states have developed anything near what one would call effective "accountability" system based on ambitious academic standards.

On the evaluation side, the two major longitudinal studies of Title I found that the program had made almost no difference in the achievement of students who received services.

In short, schools have continually answered calls for fiscal and academic accountability by adopting self-protective yet ineffective practices. In turn, studies of Title I's effects have shown what one might have expected: that Title I services, in general, add little value to a child's education.

Today's most widely touted solution is to use Title I dollars as leverage for whole-school improvement. So we require local schools to assure us that they will train teachers and will engage in activities that promote parental involvement. We give local schools ever-increasing flexibility in the use of Title I dollars through the schoolwide option. We force states to develop standards, or curriculum guidelines, for what students ought to be taught at each grade level, and to create assessments that test their knowledge and skills. We do all of this in the name of "accountability."

We should learn that efforts to heap more regulations, requirements, and standards on schools may work at the margins, but they will not provoke the fundamental cultural change these schools must undergo.

The theory is that local schools will no longer offer children living in poverty a watered-down curriculum if states create high quality curriculum frameworks. That they will no longer be unresponsive to poor children's needs if states threaten them with punitive measures such as "program improvement." That they will offer their teachers high quality training if so admonished. That they will stimulate parents to take an interest in the school and in their children's education if we make them draw up a parent-school "compact."

In short, the theory is that schools will do all the things *they were already supposed to be doing* if Washington forces them to.

Consider the assumptions that "standards-based reform" makes. It assumes that, despite all of the research dollars flowing into education schools, despite the years of schooling that teachers and administrators already undergo, despite the millions of dollars publishers pour into creating textbooks and curriculum materials, despite the existence of a federal Department of Education, fifty state education agencies, thousands of local district offices staffed with curriculum specialists, and even more local schools, we still need to spend hundreds of hours, millions more dollars, and untold political energy to create general curriculum frameworks for what students ought to learn in each grade. And we need to create fifty separate ones!

It assumes that, despite all the commercially available tests, despite all the tests teachers routinely use to evaluate their students, despite the many different ways in which schools evaluate children—from science fairs to writing contests—we need to spend even more money, time, and political energy to create even more assessments. And we need to create 50 separate ones!

The question is: what have all these educators, publishers, and regulators been doing all this time, what have they been spending all this money on, if not designing quality curricula and sound tests of whether students have mastered the material? Do they have any more fundamental responsibilities? And if they can't meet these responsibilities, why are they still allowed to run the nation's education system?

If three decades of Title I reform have shown anything, it is that states will find ways to set low standards to avoid shaming their local school districts, and that local school districts will find ways to satisfy regulators that bear little relation to actually improving school performance. We should learn from this that efforts to heap more regulations, requirements, and standards on schools may work at the margins, but they will not provoke the fundamental cultural change these schools must undergo.

So what will? Broadly speaking, policymakers have proposed three rough frameworks: (1) block grants to the states, (2) a continuation of standards-based reform with an even more activist federal government, or (3) vouchers for parents to purchase supplemental education services at any of a number of licensed providers.

Loosely regulated block grants, an option favored by some conservatives, would let states determine their own priorities without the cumbersome targeting and other mandates of Title I. Some states might devote their funds to developing more rigorous standards and tests. Others might boost teacher salaries, or offer top college graduates incentives to become teachers. Others might create after-school, weekend, or summer tutoring programs. The theory is that states, given the freedom to experiment, will develop innovative solutions to their unique educational problems. But, historically, most states have been no more innovative than local schools when it comes to Title I reform, and there's no reason to assume they will be in the future.

Continuing down the path of federally led standards-based reform is the option that most Title I advocates prefer. This means speeding the development of assessments, removing the congressional ban on federal evaluation of state content standards, requiring states to disaggregate test scores by race and income, and forcing states to develop accountability systems much like Texas's.

Other proposals would have the federal role grow even larger. Kati Haycock of the Education Trust, a Washington-based advocacy group, suggests withholding funds from schools that use uncertified instructional aides and giving districts incentives to place the best teachers in the worst schools. Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University thinks the solution is to encourage schools to adopt proven, whole-school instructional programs such as his own Success For All, Yale professor James Comer's School Development Program, or one of the models developed under the New American Schools initiative.[62] The federal government could conduct field research on these programs, certify effective ones, and require that Title I schools adopt one of them. Stanley Pogrow of the University of Arizona, on the other hand, believes that the most effective Title I strategies are supplemental or pull-out programs that deliver intensive tutoring in reading and math to at-risk children. Such programs as Reading Recovery and his own Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) would fit this model, and the federal government could encourage their use as well.[63]

The example of Texas shows that this approach can work—in a very limited sense. It can, over the course of a half-decade, slightly boost scores at the elementary school level on tests of basic skills in reading and math. This can happen in a state where top elected officials and

the state education agency strongly support the system and have the political will to ride out criticism. But Texas, as of yet, has seen little improvement at the middle- or high-school levels. And it is hard to imagine a system like Texas's arising in a state, like California, where teachers' unions wield great power or the state department of education does not have to follow the governor's policies. The fact that, nearly a decade after President Bush's 1989 education summit, only a few states have established reasonably effective accountability systems would seem to justify this pessimism.

What we truly need is a system in which schools make decisions like adopting a Reading Recovery or Success for All program, or providing after-school or summer school tutoring, not because government authorities instruct them to, but because they represent the best ways to raise student achievement and thereby please the families they serve.

A system in which parents received Title I vouchers to purchase supplemental education services from licensed providers would accomplish this. For the problem of Title I has never been that the federal government did not force schools to spend their federal funds in certain ways or that the program was underfunded. The problem has always been that schools receive Title I dollars whether they have designed effective compensatory programs or not. Unless that fundamental structure is changed, schools will have little incentive to do the extra work necessary to find effective practices and adopt them.

Here's how it might work: states would license service providers—public schools and districts, private schools, private tutors, and firms such as Sylvan Learning Centers or the Edison Project—and parents would choose from the states' lists. Vouchers to pay for the services would then flow from the states to the service providers. Student eligibility would be determined using the same process as now: the number of eligible children in a county would be determined using poverty data, and schools would identify children as Title I-eligible based on their achievement levels.

Why not use Title I to empower parents and children instead?

In a district such as Yselta, where each school receives only $275 per eligible child, the voucher might not pay for much. A possible solution would be to concentrate funds at the elementary-school level, or even limit Title I funds to children in K-3. Research has shown early intervention to be more effective than remediation, so why not focus Title I resources on the early grades? Another solution would be to boost the program's annual appropriation, which would be a fine idea if Title I were used to promote choice and competition in education.

Public schools would not necessarily lose Title I funding within this system. They would be free to attract parents by designing after-school, before-school, or summer school programs that provide supplemental services to at-risk children. Or they could convince parents to spend their Title I funds on improving the entire school. Anyone who thinks Title I schools would lose substantial funding in such a competitive system is simply admitting that, after thirty years of running Title I programs, schools still have not developed effective compensatory programs. If so, they deserve to lose the funding.

For all their frustration with public schools, Title I advocates still regard vouchers as an unwarranted abandonment of the public system. In its final recommendations, the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights advised that Congress go even further in regulating the creation of state standards and tests, forcing states to explain how they are helping troubled schools, and establishing "opportunity to learn" standards that outline the resources each school must have to educate children well.

To justify such heavy-handed, top down intervention, the Commission essentially accuses local schools and school districts of serious civil rights violations. The authors write, "In the [Clinton] Administration's readiness to countenance differing standards and expectations for children—one set for children in more affluent suburbs and another for poor children in inner cities—there are disturbing echoes of the old racially dual systems of education that the Supreme Court addressed in Brown v. Board of Education, and of the two-tiered system of advanced versus basic education that the 1994 Title I reforms were designed to eliminate."[64] Which begs a question: Do we really want to leave power in the hands of school administrators who set such low expectations that civil rights activists compare them to the Jim Crow segregationists of yore? Why not use Title I to empower parents and children instead?

---

1 As quoted in Samuel Halperin, "ESEA: Decennial Views of the Revolution, The Positive Side," *Phi Delta Kappan* 57 no. 3 (November 1975):147.

2 For a fuller explanation of the principles of "systemic reform," see Jennifer A. O'Day and Marshall S. Smith, "Systemic Reform and Educational Opportunity," in Susan Fuhrman, ed., *Designing Coherent Education Policy: Improving the System* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 250-312.

3 See Marshall S. Smith, Brett W. Scoll, and Valena White Plisko, "The Improving America's Schools Act: A New Partnership," in John F. Jennings, ed., *National Issues in Education: Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Bloomington IN: Phi Delta Kappa International, 1995), 3-17.

4 Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, *Title I in Midstream: The Fight to Improve Schools for Poor Kids, Executive Summary* (Washington DC: Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, 1998), 16.

5 For the debates surrounding Title I's passage, see Stephen K. Bailey and Edith Mosher, *ESEA: The Office of Education Administers a Law* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1968), Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor: A Study of the Origins and Implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 1978), and Hugh Davis Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); for pre-1970 history, see Bailey and Mosher, *ESEA*; Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph*; and Carl Kaestle and Marshall S. Smith, "The Federal Role in Elementary and Secondary Education, 1940-1980," *Harvard Education Review* 52 no.4 (November 1982): 384-408; for general history, see Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Development and Effectiveness of Compensatory Education Programs: A Brief Historical Analysis of Title I and Head Start," in John W. Barry and Bruno Manno, eds., *Giving Better, Giving Smarter: Working Papers of the National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal* (Washington DC: National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, 1997), 169-192.

6 See Kaestle and Smith, *The Federal Role*, and Bailey and Mosher, *ESEA*.

7 *Congressional Record*, 24 March 1965, 5559-6000, as cited in Plunkett, 1985.

8 Kaestle and Smith, 387.

9 Smith, Scoll & Plisko, 3-4.

10 The complaints of Catholic and other religious groups were allayed by mandating that poor children in private schools be eligible for Title I funds. In doing so, Congress established the "child-benefit principle"—that Title I funds primarily benefited the child, not the religious institution, and thus could flow to nonsectarian private schools. In most cases, public-school teachers would provide Title I funded help to children in private school in the private schools themselves. In 1985, however, the Supreme Court ruled in *Aguilar v. Felton* that having public-school teachers teach in nonsectarian private schools represented an unlawful entanglement between church and state. The result was that many school systems required children in private schools to walk to public schools to receive help, or ran Title I programs in mobile trailers located just off the private-school premises. This was enormously inefficient and costly. In 1997, however, the Supreme Court revisited the issue in *Agostini v. Felton* and ruled that public-school teachers once again could deliver Title I help in private schools. Public-school teachers have slowly begun giving help in private schools in the wake of the ruling. See Denis P. Doyle and Bruce S. Cooper, "Funding

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the individual? A Chapter on the Future of Chapter 1," in Denis P. Doyle and Bruce S. Cooper, eds., *Federal Aid to the Disadvantaged: What Future for Chapter 1?* (London: Falmer, 1988), 147-165; and "Private School Services Slow to Change in Wake of Agostini Ruling," *Title I Monitor* 3 no.9, (September 1998), 1.

[11] Public Law 89-10, 89th Congress, 1st session, 11 April 1965. Section 201 of the Act read, "In recognition of the special educational needs of children of low income families and the impact that concentrations of low income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs, the Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance (as set forth in this title) to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children."

[12] Sec. 205(a), Public Law 89-10.

[13] See Jerome T. Murphy, "Title I of ESEA: The Politics of Implementing Federal Education Reform," *Harvard Educational Review* 41 no.1 (February 1971): 35-63; and Milbrey W. McLaughlin, "Implementationof ESEA Title I: A Problem of Compliance," *Teachers College Record* 77 no.3 (February 1976): 397-415.

[14] Ruby Martin and Phyllis McClure, *Title I of ESEA: Is it helping poor children?* (Washington DC: Washington Research Project and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., 1969). McClure is still actively engaged in Title I reform, and was a major force behind both the independent Commission on Chapter 1's report in 1992 and the Citizen's Commission report in 1998.

[15] See Murphy, 1971.

[16] McLaughlin, 1976.

[17] John E. Chubb, "Effective Schools and the Problems of the Poor," in Denis P. Doyle and Bruce S. Cooper, eds., *Federal Aid to the Disadvantaged: What Future for Chapter 1?* 244-69.

[18] See Paul E. Peterson, Barry G. Rabe, and Kenneth K. Wong, "The Evolution of the Compensatory Education Program," in 1987, in Doyle & Cooper, *Federal Aid*, 38-39.

[19] Marshall S. Smith, "Selecting Students and Services for Chapter 1," in Doyle & Cooper, *Federal Aid*, 130.

[20] Allan Odden, "How Fiscal Accountability and Program Quality Can Be Insured for Chapter 1," in Doyle & Cooper, *Federal Aid*, 183-84.

[21] Peterson, Rabe & Wong, 41-42.

[22] Kaestle and Smith, 400.

[23] Ibid, 400. Also see Linda Winfield, "Lessons from the Field: Case Studies of Evolving Schoolwide Projects," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 13 no.4 (Winter 1991): 353-362.

[24] Kaestle and Smith, 400.

[25] Smith, Scoll & Plisko, 5.

[26] Described in Peterson, Rabe & Wong, 1987. Dade County's program unfortunately was tainted by a scandal that later surrounded the district superintendent who had created it. However, the program itself was not involved in the scandal.

[27] See James S. Coleman, et. al., "Equality of Educational Opportunity," (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966); and Christopher Jencks, et al., *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

[28] Letter to Secretary William J. Bennett, 5 August 1986, as cited in Michael W. Kirst, "The Federal Role and Chapter 1: Rethinking Some Basic Assumptions," in Doyle & Cooper, *Federal Aid*, 97-115.

[29] On "program improvement," see Mary Jean LeTendre, "Improving Chapter 1 Programs: We Can Do Better," *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 no.8 (April 1991): 576-580; Thomas W. Fagan and Camilla A. Heid, "Chapter 1 Program Improvement: Opportunity and Practice," *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 no.8 (April 1991): 582-585.

[30] See Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden, "Modifying Chapter 1 Program Improvement Guidelines to Reward Appropriate Practices," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 13 no.4 (Winter 1991): 371-72.

[31] Mary Jean Le Tendre, "The Continuing Evolution of a Federal Role in Compensatory Education," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 13 no.4 (Winter 1991): 329.

[32] Slavin and Madden, "Program Improvement Guidelines," 372-374.

[33] Ibid, 376.

[34] Education Funding Research Council, *Chapter 1 Reauthorization Primer*, (Arlington VA: Education Funding Research Council, 1992), 2.

[35] Commission on Chapter 1, *Making Schools Work for Children in Poverty* (Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1992), 7.

[36] Launor F. Carter, "The Sustaining Effects Study of Compensatory and Elementary Education," *Educational Researcher*, 13 no.7 (August/September 1984): 6-7.

[37] Ibid, 7. On the "fade-out effect" see Geoffrey D. Borman and Jerome V. D'Agostino, "Title I and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of Federal Evaluation Results," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 18 no.4 (Winter 1996): 319.

[38] Edward L. McDill and Gary Natriello, "The Effectiveness of the Title I Compensatory Education Program: 1965-1997,"*Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 3 no. 4 (Fall 1998): 319.

[39] See Coleman, et al., 1966, and Jencks, et al., 1972.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[40] Stephen P. Mullin and Anita A. Summers, "Is More Better? The Effectiveness of Spending on Compensatory Education," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 64 no.5 (January 1983): 341.

[41] Michael J. Puma, et al., *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes* (Cambridge MA: Abt Associates, 1997), 41, 46.

[42] Ibid, 52.

[43] The *Prospects* final report was not released until 1997, but an interim report whose conclusions did not differ much from the final report's was released in 1993. The preliminary date from the interim report informed both the White House's reauthorization proposal and congressional debate over Title I's future. See Michael J. Puma, et al., *Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Education Growth and Opportunity, Interim Report* (Bethesda MD: Abt Associates, 1993).

[44] Puma, et al., *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes*, 40, 54.

[45] Borman and D'Agostino, "Title I and Student Achievement," 319-320.

[46] Ibid, 319.

[47] Ibid, 324

[48] See National Center for Education Statistics, *Trends in Academic Progress* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

[49] David Grissmer & Ann Flanagan, "Making Title I More Effective: Lessons from Recent Research," paper prepared for the Forum on the Impact of the 1994 Reforms of Title I, September 18, 1998 (Rand Corporation).

[50] For a fuller accounting of the shortcomings in the U.S. Department of Education's Title I regulations and in state plans, see Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights, *Title I in Midstream*.

[51] Wayne Riddle, "Education for the Disadvantaged: Analysis of 1994 ESEA Title I Allocation Formula Amendments," *Journal of Education Finance*, 21 no. 2 (Fall 1995), 220.

[52] Joanne Bogart, *Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I: Draft Outline, Key Issues, and Data Sources* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1998), 15.

[53] See Paul H. Carmichael, "Who Receives Federal Title I Assistance? Examination of Program Funding by School Poverty Rate in New York State," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 354-59.

[54] Ibid, 358.

[55] David J. Hoff, "Focus of Title I Shifting from Pullout Efforts," *Education Week* (11 March 1998).

[56] Rolf K. Blank, Jennifer Gifford Manise, and Barbara C. Brathwaite, *State Education Indicators with a Focus on Title I* (Washington DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, 1997), 74, 98.

[57] Michael J. Puma, et. al., *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes*, 6.

[58] U.S. Department of Education, *Reinventing Chapter 1: Final Report of the National Assessment of the Chapter 1 Program* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1993), 10.

[59] Michael J. Puma, et. al., *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes*, 8.

[60] See both Tyce Palmaffy, "The Gold Star State," *Policy Review* (March-April 1998) and Tyce Palmaffy, "Numero Uno," *Policy Review* (September-October 1998) for a fuller explanation of the successes of Texas's system and Ysleta's success within that system.

[61] Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights, *Title I in Midstream*, 1998, 4.

[62] See Robert Slavin, "How Title I Can (Still) Save America's Children," *Education Week* (21 May 1997).

[63] See Stanley Pogrow, "What to Do about Chapter 1: An Alternative View from the Street," *Phi Delta Kappan* (April 1992).

[64] Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights, *Title I in Midstream*, 1998, 27.

Title I: Wrong Help at the Wrong Time

Stanley Pogrow

The basic Title I strategy has changed repeatedly over the last thirty-four years, but each succeeding initiative has failed to produce real improvement in the achievement of disadvantaged youth. Most recently, the federal government has embraced a strategy of flexibility and accountability, but in name only. In reality, Washington promotes practices that have not been proven effective and the new accountability system is full of holes. What really limits the effectiveness of Title I is a basic mismatch between the services provided to disadvantaged children and the youngsters' real learning needs. The key to making Title I more effective is understanding the diverse learning needs of disadvantaged students and then providing them with the right kinds of help at the right time.

A Brief History

Title I is a mechanism for dispensing funds to accomplish a noble goal. Since its establishment in 1965, its goal has been to reduce and, ideally, eliminate the large learning gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Title I is the largest single federal support program for K-12 education, currently spending $7-8 billion per year.

Each new initiative has been accompanied by brave talk from federal officials, practitioners, and researchers as to how, this time, they had it right.

In its early years, there were gross violations of the program's intentions and funds were not used to help the population they were intended for. This led to a series of reforms that incorporated targeting and reporting requirements, requirements that were tightened over time. Unfortunately, the targeting requirements, in combination with other fragmented initiatives, created a bureaucratic nightmare. In 1981, Congress consolidated more than two dozen federal education programs into a block grant, but Title I remained a self-contained program.

Over the past thirty-four years, many different approaches to Title I have been tried, including supplying services to needy students outside the regular classroom during the school day (pull-out services), furnishing extra help in the classroom, providing help after school, helping individual students, helping groups of students, and improving whole schools. It went from no accountability to high accountability. It

went from wide flexibility in the use of funds to detailed requirements that services be directed to specific students and that every expense be accounted for, then back to flexibility again. After 1988, the focus increasingly shifted from using specific funds to provide specific services to the specific students designated in the legislation ("targeted assistance") to pooling a variety of federal funds to improve the school as a whole ("schoolwide"). At different times, the emphasis has been on developing basic skills, advanced skills, and self concept.

Each new initiative has been accompanied by brave talk from federal officials, practitioners, and researchers as to how, this time, they had it right. As each reauthorization failed to produce dramatic improvement in the scores of disadvantaged students, the results were generally blamed on the awful effects of poverty, inappropriate tests, poor self concept, peer pressure, not enough money, and lack of compliance. Each apparent failure stimulated new coalitions to push for different approaches in the next reauthorization cycle. Changes in Title I policy at both the national and local levels have often meant simply reversing the existing policy. Some approaches have been recycled several times.

Since the '70s, when schools began to use the funds for the program's intended purpose, Title I generally produced gains. The most comprehensive analysis of Title I studies to date recently concluded that "Contrary to widely held beliefs regarding the historical stability of programmatic impact, the results suggest a positive trend for the educational effectiveness of Title I across the years of its operation."[1] Research has also generally (but not universally) concluded that students who receive services do better than those who do not, and that Title I students in high poverty schools do worse than those in low poverty schools. In addition, the most disadvantaged Title I students do not make as much progress as the less disadvantaged.[2]

However, the program's overall effects have fallen short. Large gaps still remain. The most recent longitudinal appraisal of the effects of Title I was the *Prospects* study, conducted between 1990 and 1993. The preliminary analysis of the findings concluded that "Over a one-year period ... the progress of Chapter I participants on standardized tests and on criterion-referenced tests was no better than that of non participants with similar backgrounds and prior achievement."[3] While this finding was generally used by supporters of Title I to argue for new policies and by opponents to argue the futility of compensatory approaches, there were many methodological problems with the analysis.[4] The final *Prospects* report was less pessimistic. It noted: "Because one might expect the gaps to grow over time without a special intervention, it may be that Chapter I is helping participating students but is too weak an intervention to bring them up to par with their classmates."[5] Other research supports the likely widening of gaps in the absence of Title I services.[6] Some gap reduction does appear to occur at the early elementary grade levels, but gaps that exist by the end of the third grade do not narrow thereafter.[7]

The failure of early gains to be sustained, and of gaps to continue narrowing after the early grades, appears to result largely from the fact that the relative achievement of disadvantaged students declines after the third grade, particularly in high poverty schools. The data in Table I illustrate this problem.

Table I

Percent of Students in High Poverty Schools Achieving Mastery of Basic Skills[8]

Subject	*Grade 3*	*Grade 6*
Reading	18.8	5.4
Math	31.5	19.6

Simply put, grades 4–8 are the black hole of American education which seems to suck in whatever progress has been made. New York City schools chancellor Rudy Crew recently called grades 6–8 a "wasteland," since performance nose-dives in sixth grade.[9] Few educational practices have been proven effective for educationally disadvantaged students after third grade. As a result, efforts to improve schools usually focus on "getting students off to a good start" in grades K–3. When such efforts fail to produce sustained improvements, states and districts respond by spending even more on K–3. Dealing with this fall-off is a major focus of this paper.

The only long-term data base on learning gaps at the elementary and middle school grade levels is provided by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP has tracked the learning gaps between whites and minorities since 1971. While this is not the same as gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged, NAEP data are widely cited in policy studies of Title I because (a) it is the best database there is on learning gaps over time; (b) there is overlap between the two types of gaps; and (c) changes in the NAEP gaps do appear to be strongly influenced by some educational variables.[10]

Allowing federal funds to be used for all students is based on the belief that improving the whole school is the best way to help low income students, but there is no research to support this hypothesis.

The most recent NAEP cycle (1998) showed that, although gaps have narrowed substantially since the early 1970s, they have generally widened again in math and reading since 1988. While the extent to which Title I has influenced the narrowing and subsequent rewidening of these gaps is not known, if such rewidening continues it may indicate that Title I policy took a wrong turn around 1988.[11]

A 1996 report on Title I from the U.S. Department of Education largely blames the disappointing Title I results in the preliminary *Prospects* report and the rewidening of white-minority NAEP gaps on the use of special programs outside the regular classroom (pull-outs) and on low level curricula within the classroom. The problem with blaming pull-outs is that some of the most creative and effective interventions [including my own] are pull-outs. Since the use of pull-outs declined dramatically at the same time that score gaps rewidened, it is hard to see how pull-outs could be responsible for the trend.

In the meantime, schoolwide approaches are touted as the solution. The last Title I reauthorization (in 1994) continued to liberalize their use in order to provide more schools with increased flexibility. In addition, accountability was switched from student performance on nationally normed tests to new state tests linked to state standards.

Given the rewidening of gaps, the checkered history of Title I reform efforts, the increasing skill demands of the high tech economy, and the upcoming reauthorization of Title I that will expand into the next millennium, this is a good time to rethink why Title I has had limited success and to develop a fresh perspective on how to make it substantially more effective.

The best way to rethink Title I is to go back to its inception. After decades of political wrangling, a coalition was finally formed in 1965 between conservatives and liberals, and between public and private school interests, around the idea of focusing on student needs.[12] Once the program started, however, it turned out to be primarily a funding mechanism. In this paper, I will go back to the inspiration that brought the political coalition together and ask the following questions: (a) what are the key learning needs of educationally disadvantaged youngsters; (b) are these needs being met by past and present approaches; and (c) how should Title I be organized to meet these needs better?

The Current Approach

The principles embodied in the current approach, primarily those of increased flexibility and accountability, are important ones; and the goal of increasing the quality of content provided to disadvantaged students is a good one. Yet there are also reasons to doubt that this approach will boost the performance of disadvantaged students and reduce gaps. This is because the federal government is embracing flexibility in name while at the same time heavily promoting practices that have not been proven to be effective. In addition, schools do not always use flexibility to make informed decisions. The current accountability system is seriously flawed and longstanding problems are not addressed.

Promoting Unproven Approaches

Under the older "targeted assistance" model, Title I funds were used to provide services directly to the low income students that the funds were intended to help. Schools had to maintain detailed accounting records showing how the money was spent and on whom it was spent. Districts had to show that program funds were used to provide services to the most needy low income students above and beyond what the district was providing for the rest of its students.

Since 1988, the federal government has encouraged the use of the "schoolwide" approach whereby schools can combine funds from a variety of programs, including Title I, and spend the money in ways that are aimed at improving the school as a whole rather than Title I students in particular. Schools do not have to account for the pooled funds separately or indicate which services are provided to which students. Beginning in 1988, schools were allowed to use Title I funds for schoolwide reforms if at least 75 percent of the students in the school were low income. In 1994, the schoolwide option was extended to schools with as few as 50 percent low income students.

Allowing federal funds to be used for all students in a school is based on the belief that improving the whole school is the best way to help low income students, but there is no

research to support this hypothesis. It might seem more logical to expect that, as improvements are made to the overall school, the more privileged students in the school will take greater advantage of the opportunities than low income students will. (This is less of a problem in the highest poverty schools.) Under such conditions, the learning gap will widen.

Since 1988, federal and state officials have urged eligible schools to switch to the schoolwide approach, although they can still use the traditional approach. As yet, however, there is no evidence that schoolwides produce improved results or even consistent benefits.[13] A recent independent analysis of all the evaluations to date concludes, "The data ... do not offer compelling evidence for or against schoolwide programs..."[14] For example, Philadelphia was held up during the reauthorization process as a demonstration of the advantage of the schoolwide model, but the data paint a different picture.[15]

The best known schoolwide program is Success for All (SFA). Research on it has largely been conducted at Johns Hopkins University—which was until recently the home of the program. The major SFA demonstration and research site was in the Baltimore Public Schools. Claims that SFA students did better than those in control schools led Johns Hopkins researchers to label the program a success, and these findings were cited by those who favored liberalizing the use of schoolwides in the last reauthorization cycle. Recent independent analyses of these results, and SFA in general, paint a very different picture.[16] An independent reanalysis of the Baltimore data found very low achievement levels.[17] With summer loss taken into consideration, SFA students started the sixth grade reading at approximately third grade level, despite spending substantially more than the comparison schools. The two independent evaluations concluded that gains from Success for All occurred only in kindergarten and first grade.[18]

The Coalition of Essential Schools is by far the most lavishly funded schoolwide programmatic change effort ever put together. Yet, after more than fifteen years, there is no hard data supporting its effectiveness. This is also true of other national schoolwide programs.[19] While the New American Schools designs like to point out that they are research-based and cite the work of the RAND Corporation, to date no data on their effectiveness have been published.[20] Nor is there reasonable evidence that other popular schoolwide models are effective,[21] or that the massive school change and restructuring projects generously funded by foundations in the '80s and '90s have produced any results.

Only federally funded studies conclude that schoolwides are better. For example, a U.S. Department of Education report evaluating Title I outcomes concluded that high-performing high poverty schools are characterized by "greater use of the schoolwide Chapter I program."[22] Unfortunately, the reality is that there were only *five* schools in the national sample that qualified as both high poverty and high-performing (a sad fact in and of itself). Of these, three were using schoolwide approaches and two were not. Is this "greater use"? It appears that U.S. Department of Education funded research is geared to support current department policy preferences.

Another Department of Education study released in 1997 concluded that "Students in schools working with whole-school reform tended to achieve greater gains than did students in

schools attempting various pullout programs."[23] However, the study design favored schoolwide models in that the best pull-outs were not incorporated or allocated appropriately by grade spans.[24] The Johns Hopkins researchers who conducted the study are well-known advocates of the schoolwide approach.[25]

To date, the studies of schoolwides do not demonstrate better results than those produced historically in Title I through simple improvement mechanisms such as tutoring and curriculum alignment. Neither the general schoolwide approach nor extant schoolwide designs have demonstrated substantial effectiveness.

Schoolwide interventions are also extremely expensive[26] and inefficient in terms of human resources. For example, it takes James Comer's School Development Project five to seven years to be institutionalized.[27] How many schools can stay the course for such a long period of time? What happens to students in the meantime?[28]

Besides promoting the general schoolwide concept, federal and state officials are now pushing specific models. The Obey-Porter Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) legislation provides $150 million for schools to pilot research-based schoolwide interventions as a pilot for the upcoming Title I reauthorization. This legislation lists seventeen programs that are supposedly "research-based". Many states used this list to identify approved programs. New Jersey's Commissioner of Education went further and recommended that schools use the funds generated by the state's recent school finance settlement to adopt the Success for All program.[29] However, as I point out elsewhere in this paper, there are virtually no data to support the use of the specific programs listed in the Obey-Porter legislation or the one recommended by the New Jersey Commissioner, although such listing gave them a major competitive advantage.

Accountability Problems

Title I students have traditionally been evaluated with nationally normed standardized tests. Since these tests don't match up with the academic standards that the states were required to develop in the 1990s, the 1994 law mandated a new evaluation strategy based on new state testing systems linked to state standards. The goal was to pressure schools to improve their overall instructional process so that all students meet high state standards, and to place on notice those schools that did not meet the standards. But the state tests introduce a new source of uncertainty. Evaluations of state standards find wide disparities in their quality. This means those students with the same ability and knowledge will attain different ratings in different states. That's a problem for a national program.

The 1994 legislation also created a period of limbo, as the new tests do not have to be administered until 2000–2001 at the earliest, well after the next reauthorization. While waiting for new tests to be developed, states are not required to use transitional assessments and do not have to disaggregate any test results to determine how low income students are doing. Results are reported for the school as a whole. The law requires that data be analyzed in terms of how low income students are doing only after the tests are shown to be statisti-

cally sound. Until that stage is reached we will not know from state tests how low income students are doing.

Several other accountability issues deserve mention:

- The law does not require schools to assess students who have not been at that school the entire year. It makes sense not to hold a school accountable for the performance of a student who has not been there long enough to benefit from the program. Still, given the mobility rates among Title I students in high poverty schools, perhaps 20 to 40 percent of the Title I students could thus be excluded from a school's results. This means that the results will give an artificially high estimate of the school's performance and the achievement of its disadvantaged pupils.

- There are enormous incentives for schools to discourage their lowest-performing students from taking the standardized tests.

- Tests are infrequent and there is no provision for monitoring individual student progress. There is generally only one testing point at the elementary grades. Students can go for as long as six years before being retested. In addition, tests do not have to start until fifth grade so there is no early warning system.

  Some states voluntarily go beyond these minimum testing requirements. For example, Texas tests all its students in reading and math in all grades from three through eight, and reports results in such a way that schools can tell whether students are making progress or falling behind. However, previous history suggests that most states will only implement the minimum accountability provisions.

As we have less information on individual students or types of students, real accountability becomes more difficult. Moreover, some accountability provisions for schoolwide programs were loosened in 1994.[30]

The 1996 Title I Interim Report from the U.S. Department of Education justified this easing of accountability requirements by noting problems with the "tough" accountability provisions in the 1988 amendments. (These had merely required that students would maintain their national standing, not necessarily make gains.) Of the 11,000 schools receiving Title I funds that were identified for program improvement in 1994–95 (out of 50,000 Title I schools in total), over half had been in that status for at least two years, almost 1,000 for at least four years, and over 100 had been "in improvement" since the 1988 amendments went into effect. [31] Clearly, there is a failure of will and expertise at the local and state levels, and insufficient penalties for ongoing failure. This is an infrastructure problem that remains today and a reflection of what happens in the absence of serious incentives or sanctions.

Other Problems in the 1994 legislation

1. Few validated, consistently effective programs are available today. There is need for more powerful and systematic interventions to produce the desired results. While Title I spends almost $8 billion a year to help students, there is no funding to develop and

disseminate better approaches. We need a whole new generation of more powerful interventions—particularly after third grade.[32]

The only recent development initiative is the high profile New American Schools project begun in the Bush administration. This encouraged the private sector to put up the funds to create new school models. What aren't available are relatively modest grants for individuals to develop new approaches. I was lucky to get funding at a time when my program and I were unknown. The preference for 'brand name' whole school designs and celebrated individuals would prevent such a grant today. We need sustained but modest levels of funding for a wide variety of development projects, including some by relative unknowns.

2. While many wonderful teachers and aides work in high poverty schools, all too often Title I services have been provided by the weakest teachers in a school or exclusively by aides. In addition, high poverty schools find it difficult to attract and retain expert veteran teachers.

3. Perhaps the biggest and best hidden long-term problem with the effectiveness of Title I has been its failure to understand what students' fundamental learning needs are and to better target services. This is the focus of the next section.

Summary

Today, the federal government is again promoting a solution—schoolwide reform—for which no supporting data exist. Promoting schoolwides as "the" answer continues the thirty-four-year tradition of reforming Title I by changing its philosophical approach. This time, the reform has the potential to widen the gap if the more advantaged students in a school take greater advantage of the opportunities that schoolwides offer.

Programmatic and fiscal flexibility work best when coupled with accountability for results. The two were joined on paper when ESEA was reauthorized in 1994. However, weaknesses in the accountability system, in particular the focus on the school rather than on disadvantaged students, has essentially decoupled them. The new accountability system makes it very difficult to determine whether the current Title I arrangements are actually helping disadvantaged students.

How Student Learning Needs Affect Title I Outcomes[33]

While much of this paper is aimed at fixing key specifics of the current legislation, something larger than these details has limited the effectiveness of Title I and most other compensatory education programs: a basic misfit between the services provided to disadvantaged children and the children's fundamental learning needs.

Few would disagree that Title I should focus on children's needs. However, professional wisdom about how to meet those needs has shifted dramatically over time. At times they have been described in terms of academic deficiencies, at other times in terms of social or emo-

tional issues (peer pressure, low self-concept, etc.). In the '60s and '70s, Title I focused on treating every student as an individual and matching instruction to that individual's needs. This was, of course, totally impractical. The late '80s and '90s represent an about face, with each student receiving exactly the same treatment out of an egalitarian sense of fairness and as a reaction against tracking.[34] Both approaches fall short.

The Title I legislation itself has traditionally defined need in a very crude way. It specifies that services must first be provided to students with the lowest test scores, who then get served, served, served, and served some more until the money runs out. This assumes that there is a single learning need, and that some students have more or less of that need as determined by their performance on a test. In this section, I sketch a more detailed picture of student learning needs, one based on my research over two decades.[35] I also discuss the policy implications of this conception of learning needs.

Historically, where high level content has been provided for all students, disadvantaged students find themselves moved directly into courses that require problem solving without first having developed the requisite sense of understanding.

Model of Student Learning Needs

1. *Most disadvantaged students have normal levels of intellectual ability.*

With appropriate help, the vast majority of Title I students have the ability to perform at a high academic level.

2. *There is no single, uniform learning need among Title I students.*

The main learning problems of disadvantaged students evolve over time. Students in grades K–3 and in grades 4–8 require different approaches.

The biggest learning problem in K–3 is that students lack fundamental pieces of basic content (e.g., do not know letters or phonemes or numbers) and do not know how to interact socially in school.

The biggest learning problem after third grade is that students do not understand how to deal with ideas, generalizations, or abstractions. This becomes a problem in grades 4–8 because the curriculum then becomes more complex and requires more advanced forms of thinking.[36] Students who lack a sense of understanding have trouble applying their specific content knowledge. They tend to regurgitate the content in the form in which it was taught. This does not help them if the items on the test are in a different form or require problem-solving skills.

Among Title I students in grades 4–8, there appear to be three very distinct fundamental learning needs:

(a) **Students who do not understand how to understand complex ideas**. I estimate that this group makes up approximately 80-85 percent of Title I students in grades 4–8.

(b) **Students who have physiologically based needs that inhibit learning (e.g., students who are dyslexic or severely hyperactive)**. I believe that students in this category make up about 10 percent of the Title I population.

(c) **Students who are truly below average in mental ability**. These students should really be in another program but, for one reason or another, do not qualify. I estimate that these students constitute perhaps 10 percent of the Title I population.

3. *Until a sense of understanding is developed, disadvantaged students in grades 4–8 will not succeed— even though most have the potential to succeed.*[37]

Placing students who do not have a sense of understanding in a science or social studies class which uses a problem-solving approach is the equivalent of placing those students in courses taught in Russian. Historically, where high level content has been provided for *all* students, disadvantaged students find themselves moved directly into courses that require problem solving without first having developed the requisite sense of understanding. Thus they are given opportunities for which they are not prepared. The failure to first develop a sense of understanding explains why many well intentioned reforms of the past did not work. Developing a general sense of understanding is the catalyst that enables disadvantaged students to learn everything else at a more sophisticated level.

4. *A sense of understanding can be developed in most disadvantaged students in grades 4-8 through approximately two years of specially designed conversation activities in a small group setting for thirty-five to forty minutes a day.*

A sense of understanding does not arise from casual effort. It is developed through extensive and intensive conversations about ideas with adults. For earlier generations of students, this conversation often took place around the dinner table. The conversation needed to develop a sense of understanding is the kind where the child is pushed to explain things and justify his or her decisions. However, the amount of conversation in the home varies dramatically by economic status. A recent study of home discussion patterns found that working-class parents made half as many statements to their young children per hour as professional-level parents, and welfare parents made half as many statements to their young children as working-class parents did. The children exposed to higher levels of parental conversation did better on a measure of developmental IQ at age three, and these differences remained at age nine.[38]

It is difficult for schools to provide adequate amounts of the types of conversation needed to develop understanding. In classrooms with many disadvantaged students, it is virtually impossible to provide the extensive interaction opportunities needed to develop the sense of understanding—as impossible as it is to have deep conversations with thirty guests at a party.

Nor will just any type of conversation produce the necessary shift in how the mind works. To be effective, such conversation needs an excellent teacher, a small group, and a curriculum designed to promote forms of discussion that require students to make and justify predictions and generalize ideas from one situation to another. It is hard for someone who has not worked directly with Title I students to understand how underdeveloped is their initial ability to reflect upon and articulate their ideas and strategies for solving a problem and how much patient work is needed to bring out their natural ability to discuss ideas. Supporting the extra costs associated with providing the types of discussions needed to develop a sense of understanding would be an ideal use of Title I funds.

5. *Developing a sense of understanding after third grade generates substantial gains both in standardized test scores and on a wide variety of alternative measures of learning.*

My research shows that investing the right amount of time in grades 4–8 with a high quality program designed to develop student understanding produces far greater gains on standardized tests, especially in reading comprehension, than supplemental remedial help. (This is true even for students who enter fourth grade with low levels of basic skills.)[39]

Robert Slavin was mistaken when he said: "... failure in the early grades does virtually guarantee failure in later schooling."[40] Student performance after third grade appears to increase or decrease as a function of the type of supplemental help and curriculum that is provided. Once a sense of understanding is developed, most forms of academic learning, from basic to advanced skills, are accelerated.[41] (This assumes that students are also taught the specific skills and knowledge that they need.)

A fundamental reason why it has been so hard to reduce gaps after third grade is that Title I has not aligned its interventions with the diverse learning needs of disadvantaged students.

Once disadvantaged students have developed a sense of understanding, they can be successful in high level content. Providing the right kind of help at the right time offers the potential to reduce learning gaps after third grade.

Policy Implications of the Learning Needs Model

A strategic shift is needed between grades K–3 and 4–8 since this is where the primary inhibitor of learning shifts. The same approach is not likely to work at both levels.[42] Much of the historic drop in the performance of disadvantaged students after third grade is at least partly a result of a mismatch between services provided and pupils' fundamental learning needs.

The unmet need to develop a sense of understanding after third grade—a need which is unmet under both the traditional and schoolwide approach—means that current efforts to provide high level content to all students may actually end up widening gaps. Advantaged students will benefit from the enhanced content opportunity while disadvantaged youngsters with an undeveloped sense of understanding will fall further behind.

Accelerating the learning of educationally disadvantaged students after third grade requires a proper sequence of activities over a three to four year period. This creates problems for site-based reform (i.e., each school establishing its own approach) as mobile students cannot get the necessary sustained sequence. The same is true of students transitioning from elementary to middle school.

Helping students after third grade by just teaching to the test or reinforcing content will not work for most disadvantaged students. ***Producing learning gains after third grade requires more sophisticated forms of help than at younger grade levels, but the payoffs are tremendous***.

This learning needs model is summarized in Table II below.

Table II

How to Meet Fundamental Learning Needs

Grade Level	*Primary Learning Need*	*Basic Intervention*
K–3	• Content knowledge	• Teach reading in kindergarten • Tutoring help • Reduced class size
4–8	• Develop a sense of understanding • True low mental ability students • Physiological issues	• Small group, Socratic style, structured conversation • Tutoring help to automate skills • Get appropriate specialized help

This learning needs model, sketchy as it is, provides a basis for designing more effective Title I strategies and understanding some of the program's long-lasting problems. Hopefully, other researchers will further elaborate the specific needs and how to best meet them.[43]

Why Efforts to Help Disadvantaged Students Catch Up Usually Fail After Third Grade

As previously noted, a key problem in Title I is the drop-off in gains after third or fourth grade. Failure to properly focus services on the changing needs of students appears to be a major factor. When remedial and reinforcement approaches are successful in grades K–3, schools tend to continue to use them to help disadvantaged students in grades 4–8. However, of the three types of disadvantaged students in grades 4–8, only the low mental ability students (who make up only 10 percent of the Title I population) benefit from this remedial approach. It actually inhibits the learning of students who need to develop a sense of understanding because it teaches them to view content as discrete pieces of information instead of learning how to tie ideas together. The poorly served population represents 80–85 percent of Title I students. I believe that this mismatch drives down the overall performance of Title I students after third grade.

While some low income students receive the wrong kind of assistance in grades 4–8, many high potential low income students in high poverty schools receive no services. Under the current limited definition of need (based on the lowest test scores) in targeted assistance models, most high poverty schools do not have adequate funds to serve most of the low income students who need and can develop a sense of understanding—since they often do not have the lowest test scores. In a schoolwide model, none of these students may get the specific help that they need.

The students most discriminated against in America are high potential, motivated students in high poverty schools who lack a sense of understanding in grades 4–8. There is a high probability that they will receive no service or the wrong service.

Summary

A fundamental reason why it has been so hard to reduce gaps after third grade is that Title I has not aligned its interventions with the diverse learning needs of disadvantaged students under either the targeted assistance approach or the schoolwide approach. It has not even understood what these learning needs are. The general tendency of schools to use a uniform approach to Title I across all grade levels and types of students substantially reduces the program's effectiveness. The key policy question that should therefore be asked of any proposed reform is whether it takes into account, in a substantive way, the different learning needs of America's diverse Title I population.

Making Title I Work Better

Three major flaws characterize the current Title I approach. First, the federal government has thrown its weight behind a reform strategy (i.e., schoolwides) and specific programs that have not been proven effective in increasing the achievement of disadvantaged students. Second, Washington has developed an accountability system that makes it harder for schools or states to know whether disadvantaged students are benefiting from reform. Third, the current system for compensatory education is disconnected from the learning needs of the students it is intended to benefit. To increase the effectiveness of Title I, schools must adopt more sophisticated approaches that are better linked to learning needs. To accomplish this, we must experiment with a wider variety of approaches and develop better interventions and a clearer understanding of student learning needs. We also need to take advantage of what we know and solve traditional problems of recruiting quality teachers to high poverty schools and reducing student mobility.

This section recommends changes to Title I that will reunite flexibility with accountability and better focus the program on meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged students.

Recommendations for Change

(a) The federal government should stop promoting unproven practices.

- Neither federal nor state policy should mandate or encourage eligible schools to switch from the traditional assistance model to schoolwides until real evidence of the latter's superiority can be established.
- Given the risk that schoolwides could increase learning gaps in the lower poverty schools, raise the minimum percent of low income students for a school to be eligible for schoolwide to 60–75 percent until more evidence of effectiveness is available.
- Create a hybrid Title I approach called "flexible assistance" that provides the best of schoolwides and traditional approaches. It would maintain the fiscal flexibility of existing schoolwides, i.e., the specific funds do not have to be attached to specific students or activities, but would require that most of the funds be spent to meet the identified special needs of low income students. Such students would have to be identified, their

fundamental learning needs identified, and a certain minimum amount of help provided, particularly in grades 4–8. This model combines fiscal simplicity with targeted programmatic delivery.

- The U.S. Department of Education should fund *unbiased* research on the relative effectiveness of various approaches to Title I. It should stop contracting its policy studies to research groups that are advocates for the positions that the Department has espoused. Title I requires an open exchange of ideas and perspectives.

- Provide limited federal support for non-profit organizations to develop the next generation of interventions, particularly for grades 4–8, and for the maintenance of reform networks and/or dissemination efforts. The experience of the now defunct National Diffusion Network demonstrates that federal dissemination grants need not be very large in order to have major impact.

Up to now, Title I has represented both the best and worst of federal policy.

(b) Improve the accountability system.

Title I has to return its focus to monitoring student performance over time and holding schools and districts accountable with fiscal consequences. State-of-the-art information management systems should be used.[44]

- Track the progress of each low income student, not just the progress of the school as a whole. Technology could be used in ways that were not possible in 1988 to monitor students' performance as they move from school to school. Such information networks should be set up on a statewide basis to keep track of any student who received Title I services or was designated low income.

- Mandate one or two grade levels where all Title I students annually take nationally normed tests. This will provide a reality check as to whether state tests are helping students compete nationally. Alternatively, states can use the data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.[45]

- Require clear and demanding standards for the performance and progress of low income students (particularly in schoolwide model schools) and accountability to make sure that all such students are tested.

- Exact fiscal penalties for failure to show student gains over an extended period of time, and offer a reward for producing substantial gains.

- Increase the number of testing points (at least every two to three years) in order to monitor student progress.

- Determine whether results from state tests correspond with results from the comprehension sections of commonly used standardized tests. (If there are high levels of agreement, there is little need for additional tests. A lack of agreement may indicate that a given state's test and standards are too lax.)[46]

(c) Better meet student learning needs.

- Have different strategies for grades K–3 and 4–8, and deploy adequate funds in those higher grades.
- Develop a coordinated Title I plan in each school in conjunction with a cluster of schools that reflect mobility patterns within and across levels. (This is not needed for K–8 schools with low mobility levels.)
- Give schools more flexibility in selecting the students to be served after third grade. Low income students whose primary learning need is to develop a sense of understanding are not necessarily the lowest scoring. However, their needs respond to appropriate help and should be a high priority.
- Limit the amount of time that Title I students receive special services. A reasonable starting point would be one to one-and-a-half years in the first grade span and two years in the second. Today, only about half of eligible students are served. Yet many are overserved, often remaining in the program for as long as the schools provide service. Under the current setup, there is little incentive for schools to move students out of the program or to make the program substantially more effective. It appears that effective programs produce gains in a relatively short time, after which there is little additional benefit from more service.[47]

  A limit on the amount of time students could receive Title I services would substantially stretch available resources to serve more students and would provide greater incentive for schools to increase the quality of their programs. (Reducing the number of schools receiving Title I would also stretch resources to more of the neediest youngsters.)

  Figure out the causes of student mobility and try to develop policies to limit it.

(d) Create professional standards for the type and amount of services that students should receive.

Professions faced with a complex body of knowledge about needs and interventions, such as the medical profession, not only disseminate information but also establish recommended standards of service. Creating local standards in medicine is a form of malpractice. An effort should be made to set minimum professional standards for how to evaluate and respond to different learning needs. There appears to be enough research to set some minimum standards and this would be helpful even if they were voluntary.

Examples of professional standards:

- Require all kindergarten programs to teach reading (probably phonemic awareness) during part of the day as a condition for receiving Title I funds. This might do more to reduce early reading problems than the actual Title I funds themselves.

- Discourage the use of aides to provide *all* Title I services. (While there are many outstanding Title I aides who can deliver a wide range of services, some services require the highest quality teachers.)
- Encourage schools in grades 4–8 to provide services geared to developing a sense of understanding to students likely to benefit from such help.

It would, of course, be left to local initiative to determine how best to implement such standards.

Conclusion

After thirty-three years of disappointment with the limited results from Title I, we have an opportunity to do it right. Up to now, Title I has represented both the best and worst of federal policy. On one hand, it represents a valiant effort to help schools and society achieve a noble ideal. On the other hand, it is trying to achieve that goal with little conceptual rationale, without a strong base of expertise to direct the process, and with few validated models of success. As a result, the overall strategy has changed repeatedly according to the ideas of the moment, ordinarily doing the opposite of whatever was not working before.

While many are trying to convince Congress (once again) that "we know what works" and that there are lots of successful interventions that should be supported, this is not really true. The best evidence is that large gaps remain, and that earlier progress has either stalled or perhaps reversing. There are infrastructure problems that have never been solved and there is a misunderstanding of the fundamental learning needs of the students we are trying to help.

Instead of settling on "an approach," we need to figure out how to best deploy those few general practices that definitely work.[48] We also need a better understanding of the nature of those fundamental learning needs. We need to develop better interventions, solve some of the infrastructure problems that have long plagued Title I, and find the right balance between flexibility and accountability. If there is real accountability for results, the federal government can afford to give states and school districts more flexibility with regard to program design. However, if there are no real consequences for success or failure, then Washington must play a stronger role in establishing instructional and evaluation standards and ensuring that all interventions are rigorously evaluated before they are recommended. For now, Congress should focus on encouraging the development of a wider variety of approaches and programs without pushing a single model or specific set of programs. Congress should also fix the accountability problems in the current law, which allow low income students to fall through the cracks and create the potential for services to widen rather than close learning gaps.

Low performance by the majority of low income students is not inevitable—even in the highest poverty schools. It is time to get serious about putting the needs of students ahead of the convenience and ideological preferences of adults. It is time to stop making excuses for poor performance and reorient Title I to focus on student learning using more sophisticated and precise models of learning and better interventions. The vast majority of disadvantaged

students can succeed in school. A substantially improved Title I program can help them attain that success.

---

[1] G.D. Borman & J.V. D'Agostino, "Title I and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of Federal Evaluation Results," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 18 no. 4 (1996): 309-326. Examples of other national studies that found gains include H. Jacobson, *State Chapter 1 Participation and Achievement Information—1994–95*, (Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corp., 1997), and M.B. Kennedy & R. Demaline, *The Effectiveness of Chapter 1 Services: Second Interim Report from the National Assessment of Chapter 1*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1986).

[2] G. Borman, et. al., "The Longitudinal Achievement of Chapter 1 Students," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 3 (1988): 363-400.

[3] U.S. Department of Education, *Mapping Out the National Assessment of Title I: The Interim Report*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1996), 12.

[4] See Borman, G. et al. (1998).

[5] M. Puma et al. *Prospects: Final Report on Student Outcomes*. U.S. Department of Education, (Washington DC, 1997), 56. This report also concluded that those students served did not perform as well as their non-participating classmates, but this is because under federal law the lowest-performing students were selected for Title I services.

[6] G. Borman et al. (1998) cite several studies that suggest that gaps do widen over time in the absence of compensatory services.

[7] G. Borman et al. (1998).

[8] Puma et al., 7. This table was formed by taking the average of sub-skills in each subject area. This is inappropriate statistically, but it does provide a simple way to represent the overall trends in the data.

[9] J. Turner, "An Elementary Solution for Middle School Troubles," *The Roanoke Times*, 12 October 1998. (Obtained from the Web.)

[10] D. Grissmer et al., "Why Did the Black-White Score Gap Narrow in the 1970's and 80's?" in C. Jencks & M. Phillips (eds.) *The Black White Test Score Gap*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution (1998), 182-226.

[11] The *Prospects* study may have underestimated Title I effects produced by earlier policies because the study took place after 1988 when gaps had begun to rewiden.

[12] For a history of the events leading up to the passage of Title I and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act see Harry L. Summerfield, *Power and Process: The Foundation and Limits of Federal Educational Policy*, (Berkeley CA: McCutchan, 1974).

[13] Schoolwide reform has been tried periodically for over 100 years. Examples include the Junior High School movement at the turn of the century, the Middle School movement, and the school restructuring movement in the mid 80s.

[14] K.W. Wong & S.J. Meyer, "Title I Schoolwide Programs: A Synthesis of Findings From Recent Evaluations," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 20 no.2, 1988: 132, 15 – 136.

[15] Of the schools in Philadelphia that switched from the service approach to schoolwides, about half may have ended up with the same or lower reading scores and about three- quarters with the same or lower math scores. See K.W. Wong & S.J. Meyer (1998): 127.

[16] Critical, independent evaluations of Success for All include E.M. Jones, G.D. Gottfredson, & D.C. Gottfredson, "Success for Some: An Evaluation of the Success for All Program," *Evaluation Review* 21 no.6, (1997): 643-670; R.L. Venezky (in press); K. Wong (ed.), "An Alternative Perspective on Success for All," *Advances in Educational Policy* 4, (Greenwich CN: JAI Press). These studies concluded that effects were limited to grades K-1 and that principals felt that the activities were not helping all their students. The studies call into question some of the evaluation methodology used by the program.

[17] R.L. Venezky (in press).

[18] Criticism of the present methodology for determining program effectiveness can be found in S. Pogrow, "What is an Exemplary Program and Why Should Anyone Care? A Reaction to Slavin and Klein," *Educational Researcher* 27 no.7 (1998): 22-28. This article points out the practical problems with determining the effectiveness of a program by comparing the performance of students in a school where it is being used with a control group. The results reported for the Success for All (SFA) schools in Baltimore are a case in point. It seemed that the SFA students were doing better than comparison schools. However, in an absolute sense SFA students were doing terribly. In addition, we cannot tell whether a program is having effects if more money and attention are being given to the experimental schools in comparison to control schools. Give control schools equal resources, let them try another approach, and only then can it be said that the specific program, as opposed to extra resources, produced the gains. Finally, schoolwides like to claim that they work when fully implemented. This begs the question of the extent to which they can as a matter of practicality be fully implemented. Alternatively, I recommend that research should determine program effectiveness on the basis of whether schools using the program demonstrate consistent, substantial gains.

[19] O. Fashola & R. Slavin (1997) recommended the Accelerated Schools program on the basis of results in one or a few grade levels in three schools, and Comer's School Development Program based on results in four schools (with one grade level in two of them) and inconsistent effects in other schools. See O. Fashola & R. Slavin, "Promising Programs for Elementary and Middle Schools: Evidence of Effectiveness and Replicability," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 2 no.3 (1997): 251-307. In addition, even in the few cases where gains have been documented, it is not clear that the results are due to the schoolwide model. For example, Merritt

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Elementary School is cited by D.W. Woodruff, N.R. Shannon, & M.O. Efimba, "Collaborating for Success: Merritt Elementary Extended School," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 3 no.1 (1988): 11-22 as an example of a successful demonstration of Comer's School Development Program. However, the school was also using another well known tutoring program, HOSTS (not to be confused with HOTS). In other words, the real success of Merritt cannot be attributed to the Comer program as opposed to the use of HOSTS.

[20] Examples of recent RAND reports on the New American Schools include S.J. Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools' Scale-Up Phase*, (RAND Education: Santa Monica, CA, 1998); T.K. Glennan, *New American Schools After Six Years* (RAND Education: Santa Monica, CA, 1998).

[21] See note 19 for a discussion of the data for Accelerated Schools and Comer model.

[22] Puma et al., (1997).

[23] Sam Stringfield et al. *Urban and Suburban/Rural Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997), vi.

[24] The national whole school reform models in the study did *not* lift the whole school significantly above national reading and math scores for similar schools in three-quarters of the cases.

[25] In addition, the researchers evaluated Success for All which was developed at that institution, although none of the researchers was directly involved with the program.

[26] An independent analysis in 1994 estimated that the cost of Success for All for a school of 500 students (excluding the cost of materials) is $261,060 to $646,500. I estimated the cost of implementing a more focused literature program in a school of 500 students to be $10,735 in the first year and $5,660 the second year. Do the more expensive models produce substantially greater learning than less expensive approaches? We do not really know.

[27] N.H. Haynes, "Lessons Learned," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 3 no.1 (1998): 87-99.

[28] Most schoolwide models put a major emphasis on self-governance, achieving democratic consensus, and changing school climate. While these are notable goals, they consume huge amounts of staff time with meetings and do not by themselves result in better curriculum or better teaching. Indeed, the consequences of reforms that over-emphasize process approaches to learning and teaching can be seen in the result of the whole-language movement in California.

[29] New Jersey Supreme Court Syllabus, 1998, *Raymond Abbott et al. v. Fred G. Burke, et al.* Downloaded from www-camlaw.rutgers.edu/decisions/supreme/a-155-97.

[30] For example, under the old legislation, if a schoolwide program did not produce specified gains over time, the school would lose the right to operate a schoolwide approach. This provision was removed in 1994.

[31] U.S. Department of Education, 1996 Interim Report, 13.

[32] Nor is it likely that the needed program development will come from the private sector. I have seen only one recent example where I felt a textbook publisher developed a state-of-the-art product. Unfortunately, the effort forced the company into bankruptcy and it no longer exists (although the curriculum was picked up by another company). Even highly funded initiatives seldom result in substantially improved published materials.

[33] Most of the "needs" model was first published in S. Pogrow, "Systematically Using Powerful Learning Environments to Accelerate the Learning of Educationally Disadvantaged Students in Grades 4 – 8," C. Reigluth (ed.), *Instructional Design Theories and Models, Vol. II: A New Paradigm of Instructional Theory* (Matawah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999), Ch. 14.

[34] For a discussion on tracking see T. Loveless, *The Tracking and Ability Grouping Debate* (Washington DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1998).

[35] After I started developing the HOTS program based on observations of how students were reacting to the techniques, I began to read the research literature, which had concluded exactly the opposite of what we were seeing in kids. The research concluded that you should do thinking in content right away. However, it was clear that students had no experiential basis from which to go directly from basic skills into thinking in content and that an intermediary step was needed. This step evolved into the stage of providing general thinking opportunities to develop a sense of understanding. Later on, I went back and traced the reasons why the research had reached different conclusions from what I was seeing with Title I students. It turns out that this research was largely conducted with college and university students. It had concluded that, if you want to develop physics majors, you should teach challenging physics with lots of thinking right in the content. That is true. However, it is inappropriate to generalize such a conclusion to working with much younger, low-performing inner city students.

[36] What has kept these distinct learning needs hidden is that the indicators that a student is having problems learning in both grade spans are the same. One sees students getting low scores in reading and probably also in math. The seeming content deficit problem in K–3 is really a content learning problem, and a content reinforcement approach helps. However, after third grade the low scores are not primarily due to content knowledge but a symptom of the understanding deficit. Therefore, if a *fifth grade* Title I student is having trouble with reading and math problems the conventional approach of providing extra help in reading and math does not help much because the students lack a sense of how to organize and understand the information learned. Indeed, claims by vendors of major gains after third grade from direct content instruction approaches usually turn out to be true only for the specific test items or a test that students have been taught to take. Change the test and scores drop dramatically since students cannot apply the rote-learned information to an unfamiliar context.

[37] Preliminary research findings from an ongoing follow-up study of HOTS students suggest that developing a sense of understanding does not guarantee future success. While most students are doing well two years later, there are still motivational factors involved. On the other hand, few if any of the control students who had remedial services instead are doing well. In other words, it appears that, in the absence of a sense of understanding, it is almost impossible for students to succeed as the curriculum becomes more complex.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[38] B. Bower, "Talkative Kids Make Parents Smarter," 150 *Science News* (1996): 100. This is a report on a presentation at AERA by researchers Betty Hart of the University of Kansas and Todd Risley of the University of Kansas (1996): Vol 150: 100. See also: B. Hart, & T. Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* (Baltimore MD: Paul H. Brooks, 1995).

[39] S. Pogrow, *A Revalidation of the HOTS Program*, report prepared for the Program Effectiveness Panel of the National Diffusion Network, 1995. See also M.A. Darmer, *Developing Transfer and Metacognition in Educationally Disadvantaged Students: Effects of the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) Program* (Unpublished dissertation: University of Arizona, 1995).

[40] R.E. Slavin, "Chapter 1: A Vision for the Next Quarter Century," *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 no.8 (1991): 586-589.

[41] M.A. Darmer (1995), a dissertation study by a student of mine, found that developing a sense of understanding simultaneously produced substantial gains in (a) reading comprehension; (b) metacognition (systematic use of strategies); (c) writing; (d) components of IQ; (e) transfer to novel problem-solving tasks; and (f) grade point average.

[42] Project STAR in Tennessee is generally credited with demonstrating long term benefits from reduced class size in grades K–3. However, the economist Eric Hanushek indicated in a conversation that his reanalysis of the data suggests that most of the effects of class reduction are seen in first grade. In addition, it is not clear that class size reduction is the most cost effective way to produce long-term gains. It is very expensive and can drain talented teachers from high poverty schools. What is needed is a test in which early class size reduction is compared with increasing learning in grades 4–5. Until then, we cannot continue to put all our eggs for school improvement in the basket of K–3 improvement and class size reduction at all those grade levels.

[43] For example, while it is clear that there are very different categories of learning needs among Title I students, perhaps there are four or five categories of need instead of three. In addition, not all Title I students have their needs shift exactly at the end of third grade, and someone may discover a way to develop a sense of understanding that will take less time.

[44] Real time tracing is now technologically feasible via computerized networks that provide virtually instantaneous communication and data analysis.

[45] According to *Education Week* (21 October, 1998), Kentucky is going to include nationally norm referenced tests that indicate how their students perform as compared to national averages at grades 3, 6, and 9 in addition to state tests in grades 4,5,7, and 8.

[46] A recent conversation with a state assessment official indicated that they were seeing the same pattern of poor results for minorities on the state tests that had shown up on traditional tests.

[47] There appears to be a finite amount of effective service that is needed to help students and additional help is of little value. The Success for All program seems to produce its gains primarily the first year in grades K-1. My own experience is that it takes one-and-a-half to two years to develop a sense of understanding. Puma et al. (1997) concluded that after controlling for a variety of variables, students who received more years of service had test scores below those who received less help. G. Borman et al. (1998) concluded that the results for Title I students, who continuously receive services, are disappointing.

[48] Some effective or needed general strategies are (a) teaching reading in kindergarten; (b) reducing class size in grade 1 (not necessarily grades 1–3), (c) improving teacher and leadership quality; and (d) reducing student mobility.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Title II: Does Professional Development Work?

John R. Phillips and Marci Kanstoroom

The Eisenhower Professional Development program was created to boost pupil achievement in math and science by strengthening the skills of teachers. The main finding of this report is that, despite its rhetoric, today's Eisenhower program has no clear link to improved student performance. The activities it supports typically involve short workshops and, while there has been some effort to focus them on high-level academic content and link them with state academic standards, there is no evidence that this kind of professional development has any real impact on teaching or learning. Congress should transform this program from an unimpressive handout to a potent mechanism for boosting student achievement.

Introduction

Initially created to build math and science teachers' knowledge and skills as a way of strengthening the weak performance of U.S. students in those subjects, the Eisenhower Professional Development Program now represents a $400 million fixture in the budget of the Department of Education. In 1994, Congress reauthorized it as Title II of the Improving America's Schools Act to "support professional development activities to improve teaching and learning."

. . . despite its rhetoric, today's Eisenhower Professional Development Program has no clear connection to improved student performance.

This program embodies the federal government's most concentrated effort to date to enhance teacher performance. It works in two ways: (1) sending money to states via a formula grant based on overall pupil population and the number of Title I students, and (2) federally sponsored research to develop and identify effective methods of professional development. While professional development (aka in-service education, staff development, in-service training) for teachers was around long before any federal dollars were earmarked for this purpose, Eisenhower funds have gradually grown in importance to school districts, to the point that today the funds are "central to [school] districts' planning for professional development," according to a 1998 evaluation of the program prepared by the American Institutes of Research.[1]

Eisenhower-funded activities are supposed to emphasize deeper understanding of the subject matter to be taught and to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their instruction. Professional development activities supported by Title II are also expected to be integrated with ongoing education reform efforts. But are they? And do these programs work?

This essay examines the history and present structure of the Eisenhower Professional Development program (Title II), how the money is distributed, and how it is spent by school districts. It scrutinizes some of the assumptions underlying contemporary professional development and surveys empirical research on the links among teacher quality, teacher training, and student performance. Finally, the report critically examines the current design of Title II and suggests modifications to be incorporated in the forthcoming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The main finding of this report is that, despite its rhetoric, today's Eisenhower Professional Development Program has no clear connection to improved student performance. The activities funded by it typically take the form of short workshops, and, while there has been some effort to focus these on serious academic content and link them with state academic standards, as yet there is no evidence that they have any real impact on either teaching or learning.

History

In 1984, the Education for Economic Security Act (EESA) signaled a major effort by the government to improve the quality and availability of math and science teachers. Amid cries of flagging student achievement—the nation had been declared "at- risk" just the previous year—and a shortage of qualified math and science teachers, Congress responded with an investment of $100 million for professional development and recruitment in these fields. Activities involving computer education and foreign language instruction were also funded. Although little effort was made to monitor expenditures in the first years of the program, the Congressional Research Service reports that funds "appear to have been spent largely on inservice training for current math and science teachers."[2]

There were early clues that this program was not universally admired. The Reagan administration sought twice to replace it with broader professional development activities covering more subject areas. Congress did not agree to that but did cut the program's funding in half, to $43 million in FY 1986.

The program was reborn in 1988 under the ESEA amendments of that year. It was also renamed the Dwight D. Eisenhower Math and Science Education Act and focused more directly on science and math because these two subjects were believed to be most closely related to national prosperity.

The 1988 design provides the basic structure of today's Title II. It has two main components:

1. Categorical grants to states based on total pupil enrollment and the number of Title I students. States then distribute these funds to local education agencies, using a similar

formula, and to state agencies for higher education (SAHEs, the agencies which handle post-secondary planning). SAHEs then distribute their share of the funds to universities and non-profits through a competitive grant process; and

2. National programs, administered by the federal Education Department, that enter into cooperative agreements with a smaller number of state and local education agencies, universities, and other entities through a competitive grant process. The secretary is supposed to distribute information about the programs that prove most successful. He is also authorized to support a national clearinghouse and regional consortia for the dissemination of effective methods of professional development.

Early evaluations of the program tend to be descriptive rather than analytical; still, they provide some insight into the operation of the Eisenhower program in its initial stages. In 1988-89, funds were typically used for short-term, low intensity professional development courses: the average participant attended in-service classes for six hours or less and 31 percent of districts provided training that lasted one day or less.[3] On the other hand, many school districts and teachers took advantage of this opportunity. Ninety-three percent of school districts and one-third of all teachers with responsibility for teaching science and math participated in Eisenhower-funded, state grant activities during the 1988-89 school year.[4]

The most pronounced long-term change in Title II has been the program's growth, with appropriations rising from $119.7 in fiscal 1988 to $358 million in fiscal 1998.

The most recent changes to the program came in 1994 as part of that year's ESEA reauthorization. It was renamed the Eisenhower Professional Development Program (EPDP). What made the new name necessary was that, rather than continuing to focus solely on science and math, as had been the case since 1988, the 1994 amendments expanded it once again, this time including all core academic subjects. The Clinton administration's proposal to broaden the program's coverage reflected its hope that Title II would provide support for Goals 2000, which designates nine subjects in which student achievement is supposed to be raised.[5]

The Goals 2000 legislation provided funding for state and local efforts to undertake a range of reforms including development of academic standards. As national and state content standards were developed, it became increasingly clear that they—and systemic reform more generally—could not be satisfactorily implemented unless teachers had sufficient subject matter knowledge and teaching skills. Yet many teachers were ill-prepared to carry out the demands of standards- and assessment-based reform in their classrooms, particularly if they were teaching outside their areas of specialization.[6]

Expanded professional development was judged crucial to remedying this problem. An appraisal of the planned broadening of the Eisenhower program concluded that the professional development in core subject areas that would be necessary to support standards-based reform was not generally available, and that, by expanding Title II's coverage beyond math and science, the new program would play an important role in supporting Goals 2000.[7]

The 1994 legislation specifically encouraged greater efforts to coordinate Eisenhower programs with state standards, outcome-based evaluations, and other ESEA programs (including Title I schoolwide reforms).

To fund this expanded professional development program, the administration recommended eliminating another program from ESEA (the block grant which is now known as Title VI) and transferring the funds to the Eisenhower program.[8] This would have increased Eisenhower funding from $275 million to $800 million.

Although Congress rejected that proposal and reauthorized the Eisenhower program at the previous funding level, it kept some features of the administration's plan for expanding the Eisenhower program. Professional development spanning all core academic subjects remained in the new law, though a requirement was inserted that the first $250 million of appropriated funds each year must be used for math and science. This proviso meant that actual changes in the program would not be as great as the name change might imply. The lion's share of the appropriation continues to be spent on professional development for science and math teachers; in 1996-97, less than 15 percent of a district's Eisenhower funds could be used for other subjects.

Besides the inclusion of all core academic areas and hoped-for coordination with Goals 2000, the 1994 amendments made some other changes. The "national" programs piece was made more ambitious. At the inception of the Eisenhower program, 4 percent of Eisenhower funds were reserved for national programs. The main federal activity supported was a national clearinghouse for science, math and technology instructional materials and programs. In 1990, the national share of funds was raised to 6.5 percent, which is where it remains today. The 1994 reauthorization explicitly encouraged continuation of the national clearinghouse, now named the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, and gave the Secretary of Education increased latitude to pursue Department initiatives such as clearinghouses in other subjects, professional development institutes, and teaching networks.

This increased leverage for the Washington-centered part of Title II led to a major initiative by the Education Department: funding the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), a private organization that has developed a voluntary system intended to certify outstanding teachers across the nation. After awarding a five year, $25 million grant in 1996, the Department more than tripled NBPTS funding for FY1998 to $18.5 million in that one year. The same amount was appropriated for FY1999. To support these expenditures, funding for national programs under Title II increased to $23.3 million in 1998 and again in 1999, with $4.8 million going to the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse.

Other important changes to the law were more subtle. Under the 1994 reauthorization, more of the funds included in state formula grants go to Local Education Agencies (from 75 percent to 84 percent) and a smaller proportion to State Agencies for Higher Education (from 25 percent to 16 percent).

The most pronounced long-term change in Title II has been the program's growth, with appropriations rising from $119.7 in fiscal 1988 to $358 million in fiscal 1998. Most of that

growth took place in the state formula grants, where allocations reached $335 million in 1998. Although no recent information is available on how many teachers participate in the program, this high level of spending (and the already high level of penetration at lower levels of spending) suggests that the Eisenhower program is widely available. The most recent evaluation of the Eisenhower program, conducted in 1998, found that, although these funds make up only 15-25 percent of the funds expended for professional development in most districts, they often play a major part in local programs because they represent the steadiest source of support for this purpose.[9]

How Eisenhower Funds are Used

The Eisenhower Professional Development Program embraces two entirely different philosophies of federal funding. As has been true since 1988, the program is divided into two parts, state/local activities and national programs.

State and Local Activities

The largest and most familiar parts of Title II are the state and local activities that it underwrites. Part B delivers funds directly to states through a formula grant based equally on their total student population and their Title I population. Of the $335 million presently appropriated for this program (FY 1999), $250 million must be spent on science and mathematics. At the state level, the money is split between the State Education Agency (SEA) and the State Agency for Higher Education (SAHE), with 84 percent going to the former and 16 percent to the latter. The SEA redistributes at least 90 percent of its share to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) using the same formula used by the federal government, i.e., taking into account a district's overall pupil population and its Title I enrollment. The remaining 10 percent of the SEA's funds may be used for administrative and technical expenses (not more than 5 percent) and for demonstrations and exemplary programs. SAHEs distribute their 16 percent in grants to an array of institutions, primarily universities and their education schools but also including museums and non-profit groups.

The goal of the professional development series in Montgomery County was to ensure that teachers are prepared to help their students master the material on which the county-wide (and eventually statewide) tests are based.

At the LEA level, the district has a great deal of autonomy in what it does with the Title II money. Traditionally, these activities have included workshops, conferences, and university courses. Besides paying for the programs themselves, Eisenhower funds can cover travel costs for teachers to participate and the salaries of substitutes. Less traditional learning experiences such as teacher study groups and mentoring are also encouraged.

Yet tradition generally prevails. Title II funds are typically used in predictable ways. In the most recent survey, researchers found that 48 percent of districts used Title II funds for within-district in-service activities in 1988-89 and 48 percent used the funds for out-of-district professional development (e.g., conferences, courses).[10] To see how the funds

are used in two fairly typical school systems, we go to Gallatin, Tennessee and Montgomery County, Maryland.

In the math department at Gallatin High School in Gallatin, Tennessee, the Eisenhower funds are spent in an efficient and targeted, if somewhat unsophisticated manner, for conference fees, travel expenses, and the salaries of substitute teachers. Betty Mayberry teaches calculus and pre-calculus to eleventh and twelfth grade students, and serves as department chair in this 1,600 student high school. All things considered, Mayberry estimates that the math department spends about $3,000 for the year—primarily to attend conferences throughout the Southeast.[11]

Mayberry is responsible for planning and coordinating professional development for the staff. "As chair, I have no trouble at all getting teachers interested in professional development. Twelve of my fourteen [teachers] are begging me to go. I rely on the Eisenhower funds to send them," she said. In her opinion, these activities are "vital" to the development of the department.

Much of the professional development taken by Gallatin teachers centers around technology. Mayberry explains. Students at Gallatin H.S. are now required to purchase a graphing calculator for levels of math above pre-calculus and more students take AP exams than ever before. Since 1994, Texas Instruments has upgraded their "calculus-level" calculators three times, leaving Gallatin's math teachers scrambling to keep up.[12] Mayberry referred several times to means of 'keeping costs down"—sleeping four to a room and attending math conferences that offer many classes at one site. Mayberry refuses to use Eisenhower funds to send teachers to workshops on topics that she could just as easily teach herself. She also noted an implicit expectation in the Eisenhower program: when a teacher returns from a conference or workshop, she is expected to share her experience with other teachers.

The Eisenhower program operates a little differently for high-school science teachers in Montgomery County, Maryland, where much of the money is spent on workshops run by the county itself. The school system uses its Eisenhower funds to hire workshop leaders, provide stipends to teachers, pay for materials and, less frequently, send teachers to statewide and out of state conferences. A typical activity was an in-service meeting held on December 9, 1998 at Thomas S. Wootton High School in Rockville.

This was the second of four county-sponsored workshops meant to update teachers on developments in the biology curriculum. The driving force behind these changes is a new statewide high stakes test in biology which the Maryland State Department of Education has mandated beginning in 2005. The county curriculum is gradually being synchronized with the state's testing program and, to this end, county-wide end-of-semester exams have been introduced in biology. The goal of the professional development series in Montgomery County was to ensure that teachers are prepared to help their students master the material on which the county-wide (and eventually statewide) tests are based.

This workshop, part of a unit on nucleic acids and protein synthesis, showed teachers how to use a lab "experiment" showing how the process of gel electrophoresis is used to examine

the structure of DNA. The exercise simulated gel electrophoresis using forty snippets of different colored yarn. The in-service organizers had decided that the best way for teachers to learn to teach the lab was to go through a version of the lab themselves, so the attendees formed groups of two and three and proceeded through a process of tying snippets of yarn together, cutting the resulting strings into several parts, and lining up the multicolored strands on a display board. Each step mimicked the complex actions that occur in actual gel electrophoresis. At the end of this one-hour "lab," it seemed that the teachers better understood both the instructional techniques behind the exercise and, following a long discussion about the final step of the lab, the scientific basis for the project.

For their participation in the three-hour-long workshop, the county paid each teacher a $25 stipend, a fee that most of the teachers thought a nice extra but not a determining factor in their attendance. Francis L. Fleming, a tenth-grade science teacher at neighboring Springbrook H.S., planned to introduce the lab into her class "as soon as possible," even if she did not expect to attend the school year's remaining sessions. "I spend lots of time getting certified to use the [new biological technology] equipment," a bit of professional development also funded by the Eisenhower program, she explained, "so I don't have enough time to attend all of these workshops as well."[13]

In both Gallatin, Tennessee and Montgomery County, Maryland, Title II funds make it possible for teachers to attend workshops to brush up on what they will be teaching. These workshops cover a mix of subject knowledge and ideas for presenting fairly advanced subject material to students. Teachers seem eager to participate, and in neither district are the funds used for anything extravagant or inappropriate. A hallmark of the program is that districts are given a lot of flexibility in determining how to use the funds. In Gallatin and Montgomery County, the federal government's fingerprints on professional development are nearly invisible. School districts and individual teachers make most of the calls. Whether this flexibility translates into effective professional development activities which contribute to student achievement is another question.

. . . there may be dawning awareness of the value of changing the program but as yet little real change has occurred.

The right kind of professional development activities?

Most experts believe that professional development activities must be long-lasting and intensive to cause any kind of change.[14] Evaluations of the Eisenhower program by SRI International, an independent non-profit research institute, and the General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1991 and 1992 both concluded that longer-term training activities would be more likely to influence classroom practice.[15] In the past, though, most of the training paid for with Title II took the form of short seminars. The GAO evaluation of Title II concluded: "The predominately short-term math and science training provided by the Eisenhower state grant program at the district level may not contribute significantly to achieving the national goals."[16]

The 1994 reauthorization was intended to stimulate a major upgrade of professional development. Inserted into the law were provisions requiring that LEAs' professional development

activities be sufficiently intense and sustained to have a lasting impact on students' classroom performance. While the new law encouraged districts to provide long-term training, no minimums were specified.

There are no new statistics on Eisenhower-funded activities nationwide, but it appears that little has changed since 1994. In a 1998 case study evaluation of Title II—"Emerging Themes in Six Districts"—researchers noted that, while most of the observed districts did not offer long term professional development activities, "there seemed to be an awareness of the desirability of sustained, intensive professional development activities. Eisenhower coordinators in a number of sites spoke of moving toward 'longer-term activities'." [17]

This preliminary evaluation seems to confirm what other studies have found: that there may be dawning awareness of the value of changing the program but as yet little real change has occurred. Districts seem to have settled into a routine of using Eisenhower funds to pay for short workshops, a routine that is very hard to break. As the GAO noted in 1992, "Even though the district training activities under the Eisenhower program may not have a major impact on math and science teaching, most officials and experts we spoke with supported the program and do not support various proposals to change it." [18]

According to the GAO report, the cost and difficulty of scheduling teacher training inevitably limits districts' ability to provide more extensive training.[19] One way to try to boost the length and intensity of these activities might be to send more funds to SAHEs and less to LEAs. A 1991 evaluation commissioned by the Department of Education found that funds distributed by SAHEs resulted in considerably more sophisticated, long-term professional development than the money given to the LEAs. Yet the 1994 amendments moved in just the opposite direction, increasing the share of funds for LEAs and decreasing the portion available to SAHEs. The main argument for sending more funds to LEAs and fewer to SAHEs is that the LEAs' funds reach a much larger percentage of math and science teachers. Of course, this wider coverage comes with less depth and intensity.

Congress intended the reauthorized Eisenhower program also to support systemic education reform and deeper content knowledge among teachers.[20] Researchers have identified these as among the qualities characterizing superior professional development.[21] Yet in their 1998 six-case study of the use of Title II funds, investigators didn't find much of what they sought. They observed some activities that emphasized three of the qualities listed above: in some districts, professional development was intensive and sustained, teachers were used as leaders, and activities were aligned with high state or district standards. However, deep content knowledge, a vision of high levels of learning for all students and accountability for results of professional development tended not to be emphasized in the school districts studied.[22]

Eisenhower-funded activities in Tennessee and Maryland also exhibited some, but not all, of the desirable qualities. Professional development is linked with high-level subject material in calculus and biology and, in the case of Montgomery County, is explicitly linked to broader standards-based efforts to reform schools, but accountability for the results of professional development is plainly lacking.

Turning from qualities generally associated with successful professional development to those specifically stipulated by Congress for the Eisenhower program again yields a mixed review. Congress intended that Title II programs be linked with ongoing reform efforts such as state standards and assessments and with other federal programs, especially Title I. The law states that LEAs must submit plans for their use of Eisenhower funds that "describe how the program funded ... will be coordinated ... with resources provided under part A of Title I and other provisions of this Act."[23] Did these instructions translate into action? The 1998 evaluation found that, while there was some coordination between professional development and state and local reform efforts in math and science, there was little coordination with the Title I program in the six districts studied in the national evaluation. Activities funded by the two programs appeared to be totally separate.[24]

National Activities

The smaller piece of the Eisenhower program, Part A, accounting for $23.3 million in fiscal 1999, funds "programs of national importance" and is run directly by the U.S. Department of Education. It is very much a "top down" strategy that relies on funding decisions made in Washington. The two projects currently being funded under Part A are the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Science and Math and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Given a choice between the federally funded Eisenhower National Clearinghouse and the privately created Yahoo! search engine, a science or math teacher would be well-advised to opt for the latter.

Eisenhower National Clearinghouse

Based at Ohio State University, the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC) receives roughly $4.5 million dollars annually. With this money, the ENC sponsors a website, issues a periodical (ENC Focus) that catalogues instructional materials, and publishes *The Guidebook of Federal Resources for K-12 Mathematics and Science*, a 279-page compendium of federally funded programs and resources available in each state.

The ENC represents the country's largest organized clearinghouse of information on K-12 science and mathematics education. Yet even a cursory review reveals the information that it provides to be neither helpful, unique, nor especially thorough. A sense of its product line can be gleaned from the contents of a recent edition of *ENC Focus*, "Using Children's Literature in Mathematics and Science." *ENC Focus*, which normally weighs in at around forty pages, is essentially a materials catalogue that provides descriptions and ordering information for books purportedly related to the theme of the particular issue. Consider one book recommended for Pre-K and first-grade science students entitled *Early Childhood Units for Science*. The description offered by the ENC guide begins, "Using a whole language approach to learning science, this reproducible activity book is designed to help children learn about their world through literature and original poetry. Each unit begins with a children's literature selection that relates to a science topic. Units focus on well-known children's books such as *Leo the Late Bloomer*, which deals with growing and changing...The book provides explanations

describing what whole language is, advice for preparing a whole language classroom, and directions for setting up classroom centers."[25] The guide then explains how to obtain this book and at what price. Imagine such information duplicated 180 times in a typical issue (for 180 different books, cd-roms, and classroom modules) and one has a fairly good sense of *ENC Focus*.

Compare this with information available for no charge on the Internet. For instance, using the Yahoo! search engine, a request for materials using the words "math resources" and "K-12" produces forty matches. The first link takes the user to a site containing well over five hundred further links to curriculum materials in math alone. Unlike the ENC site, which only offers descriptions and ordering information, many of the links identified via the search engine lead to actual professional development materials and classroom aids in mathematics that can be used immediately by a teacher. Sites include lesson plans, problems and puzzles, online magazines, and suggestions volunteered by teachers around the globe. Similar results appear when one searches for information on science resources. The sheer number of sites indicates a great deal of interest among teachers, who consume such information, as well as the universities, organizations, and individuals who supply it. Given a choice between these two resources, the federally funded Eisenhower National Clearinghouse and the privately created Yahoo! search engine, a science or math teacher would be well-advised to opt for the latter.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The largest single grant awarded under the Eisenhower Professional Development Program—$18.5 million in 1998—goes to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This grant accounts for slightly less than half of the Board's annual budget. To date, the NBPTS has developed professional teaching standards and certification examinations for teachers in twenty-one categories, and plans to extend this list to thirty. A teacher seeking national board certification is required to submit a portfolio, a classroom video, and travel to a Sylvan Learning center to be tested. Thus far, the board has certified over 1,800 teachers, which represents five hundredths of one percent of America's current teaching force. Slightly more than half of all applicants receive certification on their first try.

The NBPTS has many admirers. From Republican Governor Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin and Senator George Voinovich of Ohio to the teachers' unions, the idea of national standards for excellent teaching has obvious appeal.[26] Some states now reward board-certified teachers. Such incentives include a $6,000 annual bonus for the term of the certificate (ten years) in Mississippi and a $10,000 annual bonus for five years in Iowa; in most states, teachers are offered at least a partial rebate of the $2,000 fee that NBPTS charges them to be evaluated.

Despite such signs of the popularity of NBPTS, legitimate questions have been raised about its authority and effectiveness. NBPTS is particularly vulnerable to claims that there are better ways to identify excellent teachers. "Is the national board able to identify superior teachers?" asked Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky in a 1998 review. "The surprising answer to this question is: We don't know. At no point has it ever been ascertained that the students of

teachers who meet board standards actually learn more."[27] The movement toward greater accountability in education has given many states the ability to measure teachers' performance via value-added scores for their pupils.[28] Why, critics ask, judge teachers on factors other than their students' performance when information on that performance is now available? NBPTS responds that a study examining the effectiveness of its standards is underway.

Recent studies of schools in Tennessee, Dallas, and Boston find dramatic differences between the performance of those students who are assigned the best teachers and those in class with the worst teachers.

The goal of identifying outstanding teachers would seem to be one that all should support, but National Board certification may be leading policymakers down the wrong path. While the public is increasingly demanding genuine accountability, Podgursky believes that acceptance of the peer-review approach of National Board certification makes it less likely that some sort of outcomes-based accountability for teachers will be embraced.

The cost-effectiveness of national board certification has also been challenged. By 1999, the federal government will have contributed a total of $67.5 million to NBPTS, which works out to roughly $37,500 per certified teacher. NBPTS replies that National Board certification will make more financial sense as more teachers pass through the program. And Sally Mernissi, Vice President for Government Relations of the NBPTS, reports that the Board will no longer seek federal funds for its project after the year 2001, when the Board completes its development of certification standards and assessments for all thirty subject levels. At this point, NBPTS says it will be self-sufficient, balancing its expenditures with a $2000 per teacher application fee. Perhaps this is so. But one is hard-pressed to name any organization that has voluntarily left the federal gravy train once it was aboard.

Does Professional Development Work?

The aim of professional development in general and the Eisenhower program in particular is to improve student performance. For the Eisenhower program, that primarily means boosting pupil achievement in math and science. As any education expert will readily volunteer, establishing a link between any one set of practices and identifiable student performance is an inexact science. As the 1991 evaluation of Title II emphasizes,

> Although the ultimate effect of Title II is intended to be increased student achievement and participation, most of the program funds are not spent directly on students, curricula, or materials, nor are they meant to be. In other words, the program affects education improvement primarily indirectly, through its effects on elementary and secondary teachers. There is no feasible way to attribute changes in student achievement unambiguously to the program (rather than to state and federal programs, or other changing characteristics of the education system or of students themselves).[29]

Seeking to show the efficacy (or lack thereof) of professional development, the absence of direct evidence forces critics and proponents alike to rely on research that is only loosely related to the question. Critics cite studies that show little correlation between student

performance and most measurable qualities of teachers (particularly those that reflect having attended courses on how to be a better teacher); from this they conclude that money spent on professional development is almost always wasted. On the other side, proponents of professional development point out that, within schools and using the same basic resources, some teachers outperform others. Something must be making a difference and, they contend, we ought to try to duplicate whatever works in as many teachers as possible.

One thing that's clear is that teachers make a big difference in their students' performance. Kati Haycock of the Education Trust writes that, "[Parents] may not always know which teachers really are the best, but they are absolutely right in believing that their children will learn a lot from some teachers and only a little from others—even though the two teachers may be in adjacent classrooms."[30] Recent studies of schools in Tennessee, Dallas, and Boston find dramatic differences between the performance of those students who are assigned the best teachers and those in class with the worst teachers.

William Sanders of the University of Tennessee, who has pioneered the use of value-added analysis to identify the gains that students make during a school year, has used such data to gauge the impact of teacher quality on pupil achievement. Sanders ranks teachers based on the student learning gains they produce. He finds that the top 20 percent of teachers boost the scores of low-achieving pupils by 53 percentile points on average, while the bottom 20 percent of teachers produce gains of only 14 percentile points. And the effects of having outstanding teachers are long-lived.[31]

Researchers in Dallas found the same thing: being assigned to a highly effective teacher boosts pupil scores significantly. "What surprised us the most was the size of the effect," said Robert Mendro, the Dallas Independent School District's executive director of institutional research.[32] Meanwhile, research conducted by Bain and Company on the Boston Public Schools found that the top one-third of the teachers are producing six times the learning associated with the bottom third of teachers.[33]

While good teaching can be linked conclusively with gains in student achievement, the qualities that make teachers effective, and the evaluations that best gauge these qualities, continue to puzzle academics. Current research on teacher quality and student performance suggests that the characteristics of teachers that many expect to be important, and that are sometimes rewarded with higher salaries (education courses completed, advanced degrees, scores on tests of professional knowledge, and years of experience) have little or no correlation with student achievement.[34]

Several researchers have attempted to trace gains in student achievement to other teacher characteristics. Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University has found that high teacher scores on a test of basic literacy in Texas were linked with higher student scores.[35] Studying teachers in Alabama, he again found that higher teacher scores (this time on the ACT college entrance test) were associated with stronger pupil achievement.[36] There is also growing evidence that teachers' subject knowledge contributes to their teaching effectiveness. In math and science in particular, Dan Goldhaber and Dominic Brewer have found that teachers with majors in

the fields in which they teach produce higher student performance than teachers without them.[37] One important caveat for all this research, however, is that, while student gains produced by high-scoring teachers and by teachers with math-science majors were statistically significant, they were also fairly small.

From these findings, at least three things seem clear: (1) something related to teachers is making a difference in student achievement; (2) it is not one of the traditionally measured "input" qualities such as years of teaching experience or formal credentials; and (3) some, though far from all, of what makes a difference involves the teacher's mastery of the subject matter or his/her verbal skills as measured by written tests.

What does this imply for professional development? If so many other seemingly weighty factors seem to have either no measurable effect on student performance or only a small effect, how can professional development—especially if it takes the form of one-shot, after school, in-service sessions—make much difference?

Is the Eisenhower Professional Development Program Effective?

Little has been done to determine whether the Eisenhower Professional Development Program has achieved its goals. In the "What the Program Contributes" section of the 1991 SRI evaluation, the overall tone is somewhat defensive. It is essentially conceded that the program had no measurable effects. Under "Contributions to Teachers, Classrooms and Students" the report lists expansion of the volume of professional development activities, heightened awareness among teachers, and a sense of excitement generated, among the achievements of the program. "Additionally," the report continues, "study data show that there are many teachers who have, indeed, changed their approach to teaching based on experiences supported by the program..."[38]

While the Eisenhower Professional Development Program does no discernible harm, its effectiveness has not been demonstrated.

The 1994 reauthorization required outcomes-based evaluations of the program to be grounded in performance indicators.[39] Participating SEAs and LEAs were expected to establish baseline data and demonstrate their progress in meeting the goals. However, the 1998 evaluation of six districts found that only one Eisenhower coordinator even knew of this requirement. None of the six districts had developed performance indicators to determine their needs or evaluate their progress. The needs assessments conducted by districts in planing their Eisenhower activities was sometimes based on student performance data, but other districts relied on informal conversations among staff, teachers, and principals. Efforts to evaluate Eisenhower-funded programs normally consisted of questionnaires asking teachers about the usefulness of the activities, though in two districts the evaluations included observations of teacher classroom practice. Researchers noted that these evaluations were seldom closely linked to program goals and objectives.[40]

Recommendations

While the Eisenhower Professional Development Program does no discernible harm, its effectiveness has not been demonstrated. The Department of Education has been content to push SEAs and LEAs to offer longer and more intensive professional development activities but has made scant effort to determine whether even the more ambitious programs have any real effect on teaching or learning. To be sure, the impact of professional development on student achievement is mitigated by many other factors; hence, it is hard to identify which kinds, if any, are working. But does that mean that we should take its effectiveness for granted?

If the answer is no, there are two basic options for reforming Title II. One strategy is to insist that professional development prove itself as a condition of its continued federal funding; the other is to abandon the focus on professional development in favor of other—surer—ways of boosting teaching effectiveness. In the remaining paragraphs, we briefly outline both approaches.

If nothing else can be credibly linked with student performance, then all professional development should focus on content knowledge.

Insisting that professional development prove itself means introducing clear accountability mechanisms into the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. Here are two different ways to accomplish this:

1. Use Eisenhower money only for practices and activities that can demonstrate their effectiveness. One state has come up with a novel method for holding its professional development programs accountable. According to Michael Poliakoff, Under-Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania, his state now requires institutions seeking grants from the Eisenhower program to administer tests to teachers before and after participating in professional development activities. These tests must focus on subject matter content and must show gains. Institutions unable to demonstrate improvement resulting from their teacher training sessions are less likely to receive grants in the future. This new emphasis on accountability arose from "far too much focus on Mickey Mouse sorts of professional development," says Poliakoff. "It should have a very strong focus in growth of content knowledge. This is about the only factor we know how to teach that has been shown to influence student achievement."[41]

If nothing else can be credibly linked with student performance, then all professional development should focus on content knowledge. Ensuring that fads, dubious ideas, and unproven teaching methods are not the stuff of federally aided professional development projects is only the first step, though. The next step is insisting that what is taught to teachers be delivered in a way that makes a difference in their work. No more workshops that settle for raising awareness or generating excitement. The power of the Pennsylvania approach lies in its ability to ensure that professional development adds in a measurable way to what teachers bring to the classroom. Federal money ought to favor states that adopt this type of approach.

2. Shrink the National Activities portion of the program (Title II, Part A). The projects funded under this program represent the epitome of "top down" direction and lack any accountability

measures. Predictably, they lead to activities distant from the goal of improving student performance. As it provides both unremarkable and unoriginal services, the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse would not be much missed by any teacher with access to an Internet connection. The relative unfamiliarity of professional development administrators with notions of what constitutes high quality professional development stands as a testament to the ENC's inability to perform its most basic task of identifying and disseminating effective practices.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards may or may not be a worthy endeavor; until the board produces evidence that its process actually identifies great teachers, however, it is hard to know whether the federal government should be underwriting it. The opacity of the certification process makes it impossible for anyone on the outside to know just what the board's standards are or whether others in the field would agree with them. The NBPTS has announced that it plans to be self-supporting by 2001 and Washington should hold it to this pledge.

A different and bolder strategy for reforming Title II would shift its focus beyond professional development. To recast it as a high-powered effort to raise the quality of instruction, states could be allowed to use the funds to raise teacher quality in any way they wish, not only through professional development. Some states might use these teacher quality block grants for "signing bonuses" or loan forgiveness for highly qualified teachers entering schools in impoverished areas. Others might try to attract individuals to teaching who have expertise in math or science but lack conventional teaching credentials. Still others might use the funds for bonuses for outstanding teachers. Alternatively, states could use their federal dollars to develop and administer demanding subject-matter tests for prospective (or veteran) teachers. In return for this greater flexibility, states would be required to demonstrate that they are spending these funds in ways that have a demonstrable effect on teacher quality.

Why expand the focus of Title II beyond professional development? Given the limited interest that most districts and teachers have shown in professional development activities of longer duration, it seems unlikely that either boosting the number of federal rules or increasing the amount of federal funds for professional development will generate professional development activities that are much better than those we have today.

Is what we have today satisfactory? School districts appear to be using their Eisenhower funds in reasonable but unimaginative ways. Certainly, the Eisenhower-funded workshops and conferences provide teachers with some useful knowledge of content or pedagogy. Yet, just as surely, they are unlikely to cause dramatic gains in student achievement. While these activities may be worthwhile, it is hard to imagine that they offer our best solution to the grave crisis of quality in our math and science teaching corps.

The strategy of giving states greater autonomy with regard to their Eisenhower funds rests on the assumption that those who are responsible for producing student results will make the best decisions about how to spend the funds. But if we sincerely believe this to be the case, then we should consider sending the Eisenhower funds to the states not as a small teacher quality block grant but as part of a general block grant for improving schools across

the board. As states come under increasing pressure to improve their schools, they'll be forced to think critically about getting the most for their money. The ultimate test of accountability is whether they produce results or not. The practices of those states that succeed in boosting student achievement can be used as a model for other states.

If Congress mistrusts the forms of accountability that states are likely to encounter on their own, it can build its own accountability measures into a block grant. Congress could, for example, require that states release data about student performance as a condition for accepting federal funds and could also reward states that produce gains in student achievement with extra funds.

The Eisenhower program has always been plagued by concerns about its ability to enhance teaching and learning. Thus far, the solution in Washington has been to throw more money at the program, while ignoring questions of effectiveness and accountability. Congress has the opportunity to reverse this during the impending ESEA reauthorization, transforming the program from an unimpressive handout to an efficient and effective mechanism for elevating student achievement.

---

1 The American Institutes For Research, *The Eisenhower Professional Development Program: Emerging Themes From Six Districts* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1998), iv.

2 James B. Stedman, *Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Act: An Analysis of Recent Legislative Action and Program Evaluations* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 1989), crs-1.

3 General Accounting Office, *The Eisenhower Math and Science State Grant Program*, Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives (Washington DC: GAO, 1992), 4.

4 SRI International & Policy Studies Associates, *The Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program: An Enabling Resource for Reform*, Summary Report (Washington DC: Department of Education, 1991).

5 The goals also include raising teachers' knowledge and skills. Goal 4 of the act states: By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century. American Institutes for Research (AIR), *Emerging Themes*, 3.

6 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 3.

7 James B. Stedman, *Eisenhower Professional Development Program: Moving Beyond Math and Science* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 1996).

8 Mark Pitsch, "ESEA Re-Authorization Clears Senate Panel," *Education Week*, 25 May 1994.

9 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 33.

10 SRI, *An Enabling Resource*, 15. Figures are for the 1988-89 school year. A new evaluation of the program is scheduled to be released in summer 1999.

11 Interview with author.

12 Three changes: (1) From the TI-81 to the more sophisticated TI-85 in 1994. (2) from the TI-85 to the less powerful, but more user-friendly TI-82 in 1995. (3) finally, from the TI-82 to the TI-92 in 1998.

13 Interview with author.

14 GAO, *Report to the Chairman*, 4.

15 Congressional Research Service (CRS), *Issues for Reauthorization*, 1992, crs-12.

16 GAO, *Report to the Chairman*, 3.

17 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 20. Emphasis in original.

18 GAO, *Report to the Chairman*, 5.

19 GAO, *Report to the Chairman*, 4.

20 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 5.

21 The other features are a vision of high levels of learning for all students, teachers in leadership roles, and accountability for results of professional development. AIR, *Emerging Themes*, ii.

22 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, ii.

23 AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 34.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[24] AIR, *Emerging Themes*, iv.

[25] "Using Children's Literature in Math and Science," *ENC Focus* 4 no. 5 (1997): 25.

[26] Both the NEA and AFT list themselves as supporters of the NBPTS. The NEA contributed $306,550 to the certification board in 1998.

[27] Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky, "Some Unanswered Questions Concerning National Board Certification of Teachers," *Education Week*, 10 June 1998.

[28] William L. Sanders of the University of Tennessee has demonstrated how to measure the impact of teachers on student achievement. See William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, "Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Students Academic Achievement," (1998): 9, cited in Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matters...A Lot," *Thinking K-16*, 3 No.2 (1998): 3.

[29] SRI International & Policy Studies Associates, *The Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Education Program: An Enabling Resource for Reform*, Technical Report (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education,1991), 3.

[30] Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matters a Lot," *Thinking K-16*, 3 no.2 (1998): 3.

[31] Sanders, 2-3.

[32] Jeff Archer, "Students' Fortune Rests With Assigned Teacher," *Education Week*, Washington, DC, 18 February 1998, quoted in Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matter a Lot," *Thinking K-16*, 3 No.2 (1998): 4.

[33] Haycock, 5.

[34] Dan D. Goldhaber & Dominic J. Brewer, "When Should We Reward Degrees for Teachers?" *Phi Delta Kappan* (October, 1998): 134-137.

[35] Ronald F. Ferguson, "Evidence That Schools Can Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap," (1997): 32 quoted in Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matter a Lot," *Thinking K-16*, 3 no.2 (1998): 6.

[36] Ronald F. Ferguson and Helen F. Ladd, "How and Why Money Matters: An Analysis of Alabama Schools," Holding Schools Accountable: Peformance Based Reform in Education. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1996) quoted in Kati Haycock, "Good Teaching Matters a Lot," *Thinking K-16*, 3 no.2 (1998): 6.

[37] Goldhaber, 6.

[38] SRI, *Enabling Resource for Reform*, 22.

[39] "State plans shall set specific performance indicators for professional development," Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), statute for Title II Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Section 2205 (b) 2 (N).

[40] AIR, *Emerging Themes*, 42-44.

[41] Author interview with Michael Poliakoff.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Title IV: Neither Safe nor Drug-Free

Matthew Rees

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program is meant to curtail teen drug use and violence through school-based prevention programs. To preserve local control, it has few federal regulations and little oversight of how funds are spent. It is neither a categorical program nor a block grant. Millions are being spent on activities with no record of success. Lawmakers should either turn it into a true categorical program (with requirements to ensure that funds are used on proven prevention programs) or a flexible block grant with accountability for results.

On October 27, 1986, Ronald Reagan appeared in the East Room of the White House to sign a comprehensive anti-drug bill into law. "Our goal in this crusade," said Reagan, "is nothing less than a drug-free generation."[1] To that end, the $1.7 billion law included $200 million for school-based drug-prevention programs, which were to be funded under the auspices of the new Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act.[2] This was to be the first coordinated federal effort to curtail teen drug use, and during his East Room speech Reagan said the crusade was necessary because "America's young people deserve our best effort to make that dream [of a drug-free generation] come true."[3]

. . . after spending a total of $6 billion on the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, there's no way of knowing whether it's working or not.

Today, the Drug-Free Schools program looks rather different than in 1986. While its original mandate was to teach drug prevention, the grant money can now be used for a variety of activities, including violence prevention, health education, and even after-school instruction in the arts. The program has preserved one of its original features—local control—but this has come at a high price: with few federal regulations to abide by, and little in the way of accountability or oversight, millions of dollars in grant money have been spent on prevention programs with no record of success. Perhaps most revealing of the program's administrative shortcomings is that, twelve years after its inception, the federal government has yet to comprehensively evaluate it. In other words, after spending a total of $6 billion on the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, there's no way of knowing whether it's working or not.

In October 1998, Bill Clinton announced that, in response to "constructive criticism," his administration was going to "overhaul" the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.[4] According

to the White House, that will mean more funding for effective prevention plans, strengthened accountability, incentives to develop results-oriented plans, and the inception of new programs, such as an effort to combat "bullying."[5] These changes were announced on the heels of what is expected to be a broader congressional debate in early 1999 over reforming, and reauthorizing, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) program, as well as numerous other federal education programs contained in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, where SDFS now reposes.

As lawmakers consider reforms to the SDFS program, they will have to answer two questions in particular: what is its purpose? and how should the funding be structured?

Purpose properly comes first. Lawmakers must decide what they hope to achieve with this money. While the program was once devoted entirely to keeping kids off drugs, it has acquired a much wider mandate. Supporters of this new mandate say the changes are necessary to take account of new problems facing today's students, such as violence and school safety. Critics charge that expanding the mission of SDFS has diluted federal drug-prevention efforts. Yet there is consensus, reflected in President Clinton's October announcement, that if the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program is to become more effective in the national effort to prevent youth drug use, it will have to change. This paper will offer some suggestions as to how it might do so.

The second question speaks to the issue of whether SDFS should be a true block grant, in which the states have wide latitude to spend the money as they choose, or a proper categorical program, under which states are given specific instructions on how to spend their federal grant money. Currently, Safe and Drug-Free Schools is a hybrid that includes the worst features of both strategies. One of the key challenges for lawmakers is to decide which of these two funding mechanisms they feel is more appropriate to bring about safe and drug-free schools, then make that mechanism work properly.

A Short Tour of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act

When SDFS was inaugurated, America had recently launched a national crusade to publicize the dangers of drug use. Crack cocaine had begun wreaking havoc in the country's urban areas, and there was growing concern that this and other illegal drugs would penetrate the suburbs. A jarring wake-up call was delivered in June 1986 with the death of college basketball star Len Bias from a cocaine overdose. The incident made headlines across the country, and gave Congress and the White House the nudge they needed to agree on a legislative package. The result was the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which included the Drug-Free Schools program.

The seriousness with which the Reagan administration treated the youth drug problem was conveyed a month after President Reagan signed the anti-drug legislation. The then-Education Secretary William Bennett wrote to governors and state education officials to announce that he was short-cutting the usual federal procedures in order to expedite the release of Drug-Free Schools funds.[6] The funds were complemented by a public-service campaign, led by

First Lady Nancy Reagan, in which students were encouraged to "Just Say No" to drugs. The collective effort seemed to have an impact: in 1985, 29.7 percent of high-school seniors reported having used an illicit drug within the previous thirty days. In the years that followed, the percentage steadily declined to 14.4 percent in 1992.[7] In Congress, the Drug-Free Schools program won bipartisan acclaim and was rewarded with steady increases in its annual budget, rising from $200 million in fiscal 1987 to $627 million for fiscal 1992.

But the glow surrounding this program began to fade once Bill Clinton became president. Republicans began to question the program's effectiveness when they saw the trend of declining youth drug use begin to reverse itself—21.9 percent of high-school seniors polled in 1994 admitted to having used an illicit drug in the previous thirty days, up from 14.4 percent in 1992[8]—and when they started hearing horror stories about the program's waste, fraud, and abuse. There was also a general sense that drug prevention was not a top priority for the Clinton administration: it slashed the size of the Office of National Drug Control Policy from 146 people to just 25 and it began requiring states to use new drug-prevention funds on treatment centers for drug addicts, an idea that had never won much support in the previous two administrations. In his first budget proposal as president, Clinton requested the Drug-Free Schools program be given $496 million—$116 million less than the last request by President Bush. And when budget negotiations concluded, the program had secured a fiscal 1994 appropriation of just $369.5 million.

In 1994, GOP support for SDFS withered even more when congressional Democrats and the White House succeeded in amending the program to permit spending on violence prevention and health education. (It was also rechristened the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act.) Republicans, and many anti-drug activists, feared these changes would result in the program blurring its focus on drug prevention. That prompted the GOP, upon winning congressional majorities, to seek even more dramatic reductions in SDFS funding. In the spring of 1995, the authorizing committee in the House voted to eliminate it. But Senate Republicans balked, resulting in a compromise budget decision to fund the program with $235 million.

A 1996-97 federal survey of school principals found 36 percent reporting student drug use a serious or moderate problem, up from 20 percent in 1991.

This cut was unwelcome at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Indeed, the day after it arrived at the White House in June 1995, President Clinton staged an event in the Rose Garden to veto the appropriation measure and signal how much he valued the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. "I don't think I have had any more moving experiences than going into schools in this country over the last several years...and seeing people succeeding against all the odds because their schools are safe and drug-free," he told the assembled audience of educators and anti-drug activists.[9] In the end, the program's fiscal 1996 appropriation was $441 million—the same amount as the year before—but the Republicans' attempt to cut Safe and Drug-Free Schools funding emerged as a Democratic talking point during the 1996 presidential campaign. Clinton aired television ads touting his support for the program,[10] and boasted in campaign events that it was "one of the things that I have fought

hardest for"[11] while president. During one of the presidential debates, he even chided Bob Dole for voting to cut the program's funding.

The Clinton administration's fiscal support for the program continues, though new mandates guarantee that fewer dollars will be spent on drug prevention. The White House requested $606 million for fiscal 1999, and Congress appropriated $566 million, a $10 million boost over the previous year. Yet the amount of money actually distributed to the states will be just $441 million—a $90 million drop from the previous fiscal year—as $90 million of Safe and Drug- Free School funding has been set aside for grants to fund school violence projects.

Why It Matters, and How It Works

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools program is significant for one simple reason: it is the largest source of federal funding for state and local drug- and violence-prevention programs, and reaches 97 percent of the nation's school districts. Even more important, drugs are a greater problem in American schools today than at the beginning of the decade. A 1996-97 federal survey of school principals found 36 percent reporting student drug use a serious or moderate problem, up from 20 percent in 1991.[12] Another survey, released in September 1998 by Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, found that teenage marijuana use had increased nearly 300 percent since 1992, and that students aged twelve to seventeen cited drugs as their most important problem.[13] With respect to school-based violence, there's been a slight decline in recent years, though 57 percent of public schools reported moderate to serious discipline problems in the 1996-97 school year.[14]

The purpose of grant money is to fund prevention programs aimed at curbing violence and drug use among students. The money is distributed to each state based on the number of students; 80 percent of each state's allotment goes to state education agencies, and 91 percent of that sum is subsequently allocated to local school districts (70 percent based on enrollment, 30 percent based on which local districts the state agency determines "have the greatest need for additional funds" based on factors such as rates of youth drug and alcohol use, rates of youth violence and crime, and areas with a high incidence of violence associated with prejudice and intolerance). The remaining 20 percent of each state's federal grant is given to the governor.

What's significant about these funds is that Washington has little control over how the money is spent. "The program," says William Modzeleski, director of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, "is developed at, operated by, with the input of, local people. This is not a program where there's a whole lot of federal interference. This is not a program where we at the federal level . . . go down to a locality and say 'This is the type of thing you must do.'"[15] The rationale for this hands-off approach, says Modzeleski, is that "with 15,000-plus school districts, not only is every school district different, but even the schools within a school district are different. It becomes almost impossible to create a unified program, or one strategy."[16]

As noted earlier, the scope of authorized activities was expanded in 1994. Not only was spending on health education permitted, so was the purchase of curricula that would, according to federal regulations, "promote the awareness of and sensitivity to alternatives to violence through courses of study that include related issues of intolerance and hatred in history." Similarly, school administrators were henceforth allowed to spend on programs promoting "before- and after-school recreational, instructional, cultural, and artistic programs in supervised community settings."

There are some rudimentary limits on how the funds may be spent: they must, for example, be used to teach a no-use message in connection with drugs. But there are few dictates as to how local education agencies should apportion their funds. Thus if they wish to devote 100 percent of their grant money to violence prevention, they may do so. There are also two mandates on the governors: at least 10 percent of the 20 percent must go toward prevention programs taught by uniformed police officers, such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE); and not more than 5 percent of the 20 percent can be used on administrative costs.

Many issues were raised throughout this exercise—a lack of friendliness, a shortage of community spirit. Noticeably absent was any mention of drugs, alcohol, or violence.

Obtaining an SDFS grant is a relatively simple process. A state submits its application to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools office at the U.S. Department of Education with the following information: data on school-aged drug use and violence, information on how the money will be spent to reduce violence and drug use, a list of "measurable goals and objectives" the state hopes to meet, and a report on how it plans to assess its progress and the success of its programs. In exchange for the grant, states must report to U.S. Department of Education on a triennial basis, spelling out the implementation and effectiveness of their programs. (Until 1995, these reports were required every two years.) Once a state has been allocated SDFS funds, local education agencies repeat the aforementioned application process to receive their share, submitting their requests to their state education agency.

The Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities at the U.S. Department of Education publishes general guidelines on what types of activities may be underwritten by federal funds. One regulation says, for example, that, when carrying out a comprehensive drug- and violence-prevention program, local education agencies should include

> age-appropriate, developmentally based drug prevention and education programs for all students, from the preschool level through grade 12, that address the legal, social, personal and health consequences of the use of illegal drugs, promote a sense of individual responsibility, and provide information about effective techniques for resisting peer pressure to use illegal drugs.

While this is not a mandate, it is designed to guarantee spending on drug- and violence-prevention education. But that spending can take many forms, as Modzeleski of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program explained in an interview:

> We are looking at this with a broader perspective. . . . It's not only about alcohol or drugs or violence, it's about behaviors. What are those behaviors that cause kids to be truant from school, to carry a gun to school, to act out, to use drugs, to engage in early sexual activity?[17]
>
> ...Solving a drug problem doesn't necessarily take a drug curriculum. It doesn't take somebody reciting the mantra of 'Thou shalt not use drugs.' It can mean that kids need adult role models. It can mean that kids need to be better connected to school and family. It can be family-strengthening programs. It can mean a whole host of things, which have impact much greater than just preventing drug use. It impacts on drug use, but it also impacts other types of behavioral issues.[18]

The Danger in Devolution

The author of this study witnessed the perils of Washington not exerting much control over the curricula used by schools receiving SDFS funds. In September 1998, I visited a high school in Fairfax, Virginia, an upper-income community located twenty minutes outside Washington, DC. One Saturday morning, roughly fifty students, parents, and teachers gathered at the school for a six-hour "retreat." It was billed, "Towards a More Honorable Community," and its goal was to help build a greater sense of community within the neighborhoods feeding into the school. Participants were provided with lunch from a local barbecue restaurant and given T-shirts bearing the words "respect," "integrity," "belonging," "trustworthiness," "honesty," "caring," and "responsibility." Students could cite their attendance as part of the community service some were required to fulfill.

The first exercise consisted of breaking down into groups of five or six and discussing what defined their local community and what defined an "honorable" community, and then illustrating the differences, using Magic Markers on a large piece of construction paper. Students from each group were asked to explain their conclusions, after which everyone was encouraged to applaud. Many issues were raised throughout this exercise—a lack of friendliness, a shortage of community spirit. Noticeably absent was any mention of drugs, alcohol, or violence.

The sessions that followed were similar. One was devoted to determining the proper response to a student who cheated on the SAT in order to boost his chances of admission to Harvard. Later, the group was shown a video intended to provoke discussion about racism and prejudice. The only references to drugs or alcohol arose during a discussion of ethical dilemmas. At one point, the full group discussed what students should do if a good friend has become inebriated and asked for a ride home, even though they've promised their parents they will not provide car rides to people who are drunk. Students, teachers, and administrators debated the proper response for nearly fifteen minutes, with most of those who spoke up arguing it would be better to give inebriated students a ride so as to guarantee they won't drive. Only near the end of the discussion did a teacher observe that high-school students shouldn't be drinking. But no one else—including the leader of the retreat—reinforced the anti-drinking message.

The day ended with everyone in the room asked to write down three meaningful ideas that the program produced, two unanswered questions, and one word or phrase describing the session. The exercise captured the murkiness of the entire session, while underscoring its greatest shortcoming: the limited discussions of violence, drugs, or alcohol—the centerpieces of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program—and the equivocating tone of the discussion when these subjects were broached. Moreover, the room included not just high-school students, but also students who had just begun sixth grade. It quickly became obvious that these younger students lacked the maturity to cope with many of the issues being discussed. Yet they were subjected to countless soliloquies about character, while little was heard about the perils of using drugs and alcohol.

Autonomy vs. Accountability

The use of SDFS money to fund "prevention" programs like these highlights the tension between local control and accountability. The original argument for devolving control over the funds was that state and local officials are in the best position to determine how to spend such money. In November 1986, Secretary of Education William Bennett wrote to governors and state education officials to emphasize that "this is your program. The legislation provides wide latitude for you to design activities that will constitute the most effective approach possible for eliminating drug and alcohol problems among young people in your state."[19]

But there is a growing body of evidence that the bias toward local control has been ineffective in guaranteeing that Safe and Drug-Free Schools money is well spent. Even Barry McCaffrey, the Clinton administration's director of national drug control policy, has derided the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. In a September 1998 *Los Angeles Times* article, he charged that the program does little besides "mail out checks" and that "there are almost no constraints on it."[20]

The absence of "constraints" on the SDFS program is supposed to be addressed by the Clinton administration's reforms. But if these reforms are to prove meaningful, they will have to be comprehensive. For there are already regulations affirming that state and local programs are subject to federal approval, that state agencies are required to conduct oversight and submit occasional evaluations, and that local advisory councils are supposed to report on the program's effectiveness. The reality, though, is that state education agencies often know little about how their Safe and Drug-Free School grant money is spent, and Washington knows even less. It shouldn't be difficult to answer questions about how the funds are being spent, and whether they are being spent on programs with a track record of success. But, at the moment, it's all but impossible to obtain definitive answers to these queries.

When accountability in the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program was investigated in 1996-97 by the General Accounting Office, the congressional watchdog agency, countless loopholes were found.[21] The GAO's most compelling finding was that there is no method in place to determine the program's overall effectiveness. Indeed, the report found that, in the twelve years since being authorized, the program has *never* been subjected to a comprehensive evaluation by federal authorities. The GAO, which issued its report in October 1997, did

note that a comprehensive assessment of the program by the Department of Education was due in January 1998. But, as of this writing, it still has not been completed. The delay, says Modzeleski of the SDFS program, is a function of having to gather data from the states, which he says "we are having some problems collecting."[22]

The data collection problem isn't surprising, and highlights why it's so difficult to obtain comprehensive information about the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. In short, no uniform process to collect information has ever been established. Modzeleski, for example, admits that by the time a report is completed on which drug-prevention curricula are being funded with Safe and Drug-Free Schools money, the information is two years old and "is not as current as it should be."[23] The GAO report took note of the information shortage by way of saying that, whenever a comprehensive evaluation of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program is performed, its value is likely to be minimal. "Each state may establish its own reporting requirements for local education agencies," wrote the GAO, and "state requirements generally vary widely."[24] The GAO also revealed that most state education officials claimed "they had little specific knowledge of the content or results" of the evaluations of their state Safe and Drug-Free School programs.[25] And the data that are available show the problem becoming worse: a Research Triangle Institute study released in 1998 found that local education agencies were not evaluating the program as widely from 1993 to 1995 as they were from 1991 to 1993.[26]

The problem can be crystallized by looking at an indicator as mundane as the frequency with which federal officials visit schools receiving Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds. When the GAO investigated this, it found that just *three* states said they expected these officials to make annual on-site visits, while thirty-five states said they expected visits only once every three to four years.[27] More regular site visits will not guarantee greater accountability, but they would act as an incentive for state and local education agencies to monitor the administration of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds.

The Michigan Experience

The best indication that oversight of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program is inadequate stems from the fact that some of the program's worst abuses, as spelled out in the 1997 GAO report, were only uncovered because one individual, with no federal oversight responsibilities, took it upon himself to detail how the program was being mismanaged. The individual was Robert Peterson, who conducted his own extensive audit of his state's Safe and Drug-Free School spending while serving as director of Michigan's Office of Drug Control Policy. Absent his considerable labors, it's highly unlikely the abuses he uncovered ever would have been made public. And his extraordinary vigilance begs the question of whether similar spending abuses are being overlooked, due to lax federal oversight of the program.

The Peterson audit, though completed in 1993, is worth reviewing because of its detail, and because the pattern of mismanagement he discovered in Michigan could so easily be replicated elsewhere. Indeed, while much wrongdoing was alleged by Peterson, and confirmed in a

subsequent state Senate investigation,[28] the permissive regulations that made these abuses possible have never been modified.

The situation in Michigan was as follows:[29] shortly after the federal Drug-Free Schools program was initiated in 1987, a group of unelected representatives from a variety of state agencies was established to help distribute the state's grant money. Peterson discovered that a subcommittee was formed within this group that gradually assumed greater and greater authority over the grant money. According to Peterson, this subcommittee, informally known as "the breakfast club," would

- determine payment levels for out-of-state consultants
- determine who retained copyrights and royalties on school materials and curriculum
- operate a for-profit enterprise that sold school materials, in competition with the private sector
- direct local education agencies how they should use their SDFS grant money[30]

The most striking byproduct of this arrangement was that much of the grant money was spent in an area—health education—that wasn't even permitted at the time under the program's guidelines. (State officials claimed that everything related to health would help curtail drug use.)[31] Peterson concluded that, over a period of five years, $30 million was spent on a health curriculum, and a paltry $120,000 on a drug-prevention curriculum.[32]

. . . the absence of any federal oversight made it possible for abuses to persist, without any threat of punishment from federal officials.

Any questions as to whether the health-education funds were being used appropriately were settled when Peterson documented some of the curricular expenses:

- $81,900 for displays of oversized teeth and toothbrushes
- $1.5 million for a human torso model
- $18,500 for recordings of a "hokey pokey" song
- $11,000 on bicycle pumps
- $12,000 on latex gloves
- $300,000 for a lesson plan entitled "How We Feel About Sound"[33]

The spending was of such a nature that a survey by Michigan State University found more than 60 percent of schoolteachers saying they did not even use the health materials on a consistent basis. Peterson uncovered a number of other abuses: local school officials would hire each other as paid consultants, huge portions of grant money were spent on promotional and marketing materials, bookkeeping and accounting practices were shoddy, and contracts were almost always awarded on a non-competitive basis.[34]

How could the situation have deteriorated like this, without someone raising a red flag? There are a number of explanations. First, once a small group of officials gained effective control over SDFS grant money, they were able to stave off reforms because they developed a large and motivated constituency around them, and this constituency had a strong incentive to preserve the status quo. Second, the absence of any federal oversight made it possible for these abuses to persist, without any threat of punishment from federal officials. Modzeleski, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools director, admits "we don't have the wherewithal to monitor 16,000 school districts to find out what they're doing."[35]

A hallmark of the SDFS program is the flexibility it gives to state and local education agencies to determine how to spend their federal funds.

There was a high price to pay for the wasteful spending: when Peterson issued his report in October 1993, he found that Michigan children of all ages were using every drug at levels exceeding the national average. Among eighth graders, the use of marijuana, hallucinogens, and inhalants was double the national average, while the use of crack cocaine among eighth and tenth graders was triple the national average.[36]

The final chapter in this sad story was the federal response. When Peterson brought his findings to the attention of federal officials, their investigation consisted of calling state officials, who assured them there was no wrongdoing.[37] And in 1994, after his findings had been made public, the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, Representative William Ford of Michigan, rewrote a portion of the Drug-Free Schools program. But instead of clarifying that expenditures on health education were not permissible under the act's language, he inserted language authorizing all such expenditures not just in the future, but also *retroactively*.[38] This not only cleared Michigan officials of any wrongdoing, it also legalized spending on education materials that, as Peterson found, have little to do with drug prevention, and may have even less to do with health.

Accountability Anyone?

The Peterson audit stands out not just because of the abuses it uncovered, but also because it highlighted how little federal oversight there was of Safe and Drug-Free School grant money in 1993. Yet little has changed over the past five years: as of December 1998, the Inspector General's Office at the U.S. Department of Education had released the results of just two other comprehensive audits of state-based Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs. And the conclusions reached by those audits indicate that grant money continues to be misspent.

In 1997, the Inspector General, responding to allegations of wrongdoing, launched an investigation of a $1 million Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant to the District of Columbia.[39] The review found, among other things, "significant management control weaknesses and mismanagement of the grant funds" and recommended that nearly 30 percent of the funds expended by the District be refunded to the federal government.[40] In one instance, District administrators violated the terms of the grant by using over $117,000 of their Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant to pay for conflict-management training that was being provided prior to the grant being issued.[41] On the administrative front, District officials were never able to provide

the Inspector General with copies of their accounting policies and procedure manual, leading the auditors to conclude no such manual or policies existed.[42]

In December 1998, the Education Department's Inspector General released an audit of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program based on a review of program activity in four states (Texas, New Jersey, New York, and Alabama) and twenty-six local education agencies.[43] The specific objectives of the audit were to learn more about how state and local education agencies developed measurable goals and objectives, allocated SDFS funds, handled administrative burdens associated with applying for SDFS funds, and used their "at-risk" funds.

The auditors reached mixed conclusions. They found the application review process at both federal and state levels to be in general compliance with the terms of the statute, and Washington was found to be distributing SDFS funds in accordance with the act. They also uncovered a number of shortcomings. They found, for example, that insufficient information was provided to state officials by local education agencies when reporting back on how SDFS funds were being spent. Three of the four states, for example, employed indicators that measured only the quantity of work completed, while ignoring whether that work was effective.[44] The audit also revealed that one state did not require local education agencies to submit a comprehensive plan for reducing violence and drug use. As a result, when the auditors visited an LEA in this state, they found it "to be unclear as to the direction of the SDFS program and the best use of the funds."[45]

With respect to the use of "at-risk" funds, targeted at communities with high rates of violence and drug use, the audit found that in none of the four states was guidance provided as to how this money was to be spent; hence the "greatest need funds were used to expand the services that were provided by using the regular SDFS funds."[46] This is noteworthy considering that 30 percent of the funds distributed to LEAs are need-based.

A hallmark of the SDFS program is the flexibility it gives to state and local education agencies to determine how to spend their federal funds. But the auditors uncovered one instance of clearly inappropriate use of these funds, and another in which a questionable activity was proposed to be funded with SDFS money. In the former case, the auditors found that one LEA had budgeted $125,000 of its "at-risk" funds for court-ordered desegregation training. This expenditure, according to the auditors, was "not consistent with the intent" of the SDFS program.[47] The auditors also found one LEA official inquiring as to whether putting on a country-western show for students would be an appropriate use of funds, further underscoring the need for guidance on how the funds are to be spent.[48]

As useful as this and the other audits are, they are still only snapshots. And while it's possible that the environments in Michigan and the District of Columbia were anomalies, there's a growing body of anecdotal evidence indicating that SDFS funds are being spent inappropriately. An August 1995 article in the *Baltimore Sun* discussing a program funded with SDFS money quoted one of the participants saying the program was "great . . . we've gone on trips to Adventure World and around Washington."[49] An October 1997 article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* mentioned that, because a local elementary school was located in a

"high-risk zone," it had access to Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds, which it was using to expand its "deaf awareness offerings."[50] (The article quoted an official affiliated with the group hired to promote the awareness saying "the value of the program is the added self-confidence and self-esteem the deaf kids gain as well as the understanding and accepting by the hearing kids of kids with disability.") And a September 1998 article in the *Los Angeles Times* catalogued numerous examples of misguided spending, with SDFS funds paying for motivational speakers, puppet shows, tickets to Disneyland, dunking booths, and magic shows. The article quoted from a Virginia Department of Education guide on throwing drug-free parties, which suggested Jello wrestling as an activity, with the caveat that "Jello should be lemon-flavored. Red flavors stain everything."[51]

> . . . study after study has shown DARE to be ineffective in curtailing student drug use.

Underscoring the importance—and absence—of federal oversight is Washington's minimal role in other parts of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. Consider curriculum. Not only does the federal government not have any specified role in recommending curricula to state and local education agencies, it is specifically *barred* from doing so.[52] While there are serious arguments to be made in favor of this hands-off approach, it comes with a price. In the case of the SDFS program, it puts the onus on local school officials to select one or two drug-prevention programs from the hundreds that exist. And the available data indicate that these local officials aren't making wise choices.

One example is the Student Assistance Program, which in some years has accounted for nearly 50 percent of Safe and Drug-Free Schools expenditures. When two researchers, William B. Hansen of the Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and Patrick M. O'Malley of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, reviewed the evaluations of the Student Assistance Program, they didn't find a single credible study showing the program to be effective.[53]

That a counseling program could gain such popularity without any evidence of its effectiveness is not entirely surprising. In 1997, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado looked at 450 violence-prevention programs used in schools and communities. The center found that the vast majority of these programs had not been subjected to credible evaluations. According to Delbert Elliott, the center's director, the problem is that

> there is no readily available compendium of effective programs described in sufficient detail to allow for an informed judgment about their relevance and cost for a specific local application. Under pressure to do something, schools have implemented whatever programs were readily available. As a result, most of the violence prevention programs currently being employed in the schools—conflict resolution, peer mediation, individual counseling, metal detectors, locker searches and sweeps—have either not been evaluated or the evaluations have failed to establish any significant, sustained deterrent effects.[54]

The failure to use Safe and Drug-Free Schools money on programs that have proven their effectiveness was also cited by analysts at the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), a North Carolina-based research center hired by the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate the Safe and Drug-Free School program. The RTI researchers spent four years studying a sample of 10,000 students and reached one rather shocking conclusion: "Drug prevention approaches that have been shown to be effective," wrote the analysts in their 1997 report, "are not widely used, while approaches that have not shown evidence of effectiveness or have not been evaluated properly are the most common approaches currently in use."[55]

Indeed, drug-prevention programs deemed effective by researchers—e.g., instructing children how to say no—have yet to make inroads into the schools. The Research Triangle Institute says there are a number of explanations for this.[56] One is that successful programs simply aren't as savvy in marketing their product, a sentiment supported by Cornell professor Gilbert Botvin, whose drug-prevention program, Life Skills Training, has been proven successful in numerous scholarly evaluations. In a 1996 *New York Times* article, he conceded that "researchers are not good at disseminating findings. . . . There isn't any incentive to publish in places that practitioners are likely to read."[57] Another problem, noted by RTI, is that successful prevention programs may not be adopted because they demand teacher training in non-traditional teaching methods, which costs money school districts may not have.[58]

DARE

The biggest problem of all, and one cited in the RTI report, may be that an industry has developed around the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, with influential constituencies demanding that specific curricula be used. The best example of this is the widespread use of Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE. The program began in Los Angeles in 1983, and its chief sponsor was the city's then-police chief, Daryl Gates. It was, and is, based on the notion that uniformed police officers are the most effective messengers of anti-drug messages. These messages are delivered to students via a 17-lesson core curriculum, during which officers visit classrooms and teach students about everything from decision-making skills to the perils of drug and alcohol use. In just fifteen years, it has become the nation's most popular anti-drug program, operating in 70 percent of the nation's schools and reaching 25 million students. During his 1996 State of the Union address, President Clinton even singled out DARE for praise: "People like these DARE officers are making a real impression on grade-school children that will give them strength to say no when the time comes."

Concerns that untested prevention programs are being funded with SDFS grant money are nothing new.

There's only one problem: study after study has shown DARE to be ineffective in curtailing student drug use. While DARE partisans have ardently challenged the credibility of these studies, the conclusions reached in the studies are now so widely accepted that even Modzeleski says that "if you merely rely on the DARE program, you're not going to be effective."[59] And yet there's little indication that the program's popularity with state and local government officials has diminished. (Notable exceptions include Seattle; Oakland, California; Spokane,

Washington; Burbank, California; and Fayetteville, North Carolina—all have withdrawn from the DARE program in recent years.)

The continued use of SDFS grant money for DARE teaches a valuable lesson about the importance of evaluation and accountability in drug- and violence-prevention programs. For it shows that once a program has established a beachhead in the nation's schools, dislodging it—even in the face of evidence that it doesn't work—requires herculean efforts.

There are (at least) three explanations for DARE's continued popularity: first, it is all but guaranteed a steady stream of federal funds, as 10 percent of the SDFS money given to governors each year must, by law, be used on programs that include "classroom instruction by uniformed law enforcement officials." (Only a few programs fit this description, and DARE is the largest and best known.) Second, DARE doesn't cost the schools anything, as the program is funded primarily through local police departments. Lastly, DARE is sufficiently well established that it proves non-controversial when school officials adopt it as part of their drug-prevention efforts. A North Carolina school superintendent made this point a few years ago, telling *Congressional Quarterly* that "if we said we were going to drop [DARE], our citizens would not allow us to."[60]

The independent research conducted on DARE has led to startling conclusions. The analysts at the RTI found that "participation in the DARE program was associated with greater drug use, more tolerant views toward drugs for themselves, attributions of similar attitudes for their peers, and more tolerance toward consequences for using drugs."[61] Another study, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, reviewed eight comprehensive analyses of the DARE curriculum and found that, with everything except tobacco, DARE's short-term effects on drug use were insignificant.[62] The review did find, however, that other drug-prevention programs, such as those using interactive teaching methods, had been more successful in curbing student drug use.

Denise C. Gottfredson, a professor of criminal justice at the University of Maryland, notes that DARE differs from more successful anti-drug programs, such as Life Skills Training and Social Problem Solving, in subtle but important ways: "LST and SPS provide broader and deeper coverage of and more practice for students in the development of social competency skills," she writes in *Preventing Crime*, a comprehensive 1997 study of federal anti-crime programs, underwritten by the U.S. Justice Department.[63] Gottfredson observes, for example, that "while all three programs contain lessons on identifying social influences to use drugs and problem solving, the non-DARE programs provide more lessons on these topics and also include lessons on communications skills or emotional perspective taking."[64]

DARE's shortcomings as a drug-prevention program became apparent to this author upon visiting a fifth-grade class in Gaithersburg, Maryland being taught the DARE curriculum by a uniformed police officer. The problem was not the teacher, a young female whose easy rapport with the students was evidenced by their enthusiastic responses to her questions. The problem was the curriculum itself. On this particular day, students were being taught about stress and how to cope with it. The class began with the police officer informing the students

that her sergeant needed her at headquarters and that therefore she wouldn't be able to complete the curriculum, thus denying the students the chance to participate in the prized DARE graduation party. The students were encouraged to tell the officer how they felt about this, and after a few minutes she revealed that the story was a hoax. The purpose? To demonstrate what it means to feel stress. Later, students were ordered to complete a page in their DARE workbook measuring their stress level. They seemed to enjoy the exercise, and it struck this author as mildly enlightening. Yet, just as the Fairfax program spent little time discussing drugs or alcohol, the DARE lesson was almost completely devoid of any references to drug and alcohol prevention. That's not an argument against teaching fifth-grade students about stress; it does raise questions about why such lessons are included in a national program meant to reduce drug and alcohol use.

Devolving control over the SDFS program to the states while simultaneously requiring that they disclose the data that will reveal whether their policies are working shifts the focus to outcomes. This strategy lets the marketplace of politics and public opinion do the regulating.

Concerns that untested prevention programs are being funded with SDFS grant money are nothing new. In 1987, Education Secretary Bennett called for a law forcing states both to present a detailed drug-prevention plan, and subsequently to show that it was working, in exchange for Drug-Free Schools funds. No action was ever taken, and a Research Triangle Institute survey of state education agencies from 1993 to 1995 found 84 percent saying they had an increased need for information on effective prevention programs and assistance with evaluation.[65]

Only recently has the problem been addressed. In 1997, the Department of Education initiated a competition to improve the quality and availability of data related to youth drug use and violence, and to encourage schools to use those data in selecting and evaluating drug- and violence-prevention programs. The competition calls on state or local education agencies to submit applications to the U.S. Department of Education proposing projects they've implemented, and which have the potential to be replicated elsewhere. The projects must, according to department regulations, "develop, improve, expand, or enhance the collection of data related to youth drug use and violence," as well as "develop and implement processes to ensure that high quality data are used to inform policy, assess needs, select interventions, and assess the success of drug- and violence-prevention activities" funded by the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. Applications are judged based on the following criteria: need for the project, significance, quality of the project design, adequacy of resources, quality of the management plan, quality of the project evaluation.

The justification for this competition, according to the department announcement, was that "too often decisions about which prevention approaches to implement are not guided by data-oriented needs assessments."[66] The announcement also noted that "state and local education agencies need to develop a more systematic approach to the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of data about the youth drug use and violence problem in their state

and community."[67] The competition has generated fifty-seven applications since being announced in April 1997, and sixteen grants, averaging $440,000, have been awarded.[68]

This competition is a step in the right direction, as are a set of regulations handed down in mid-1998. Known as the Principles of Effectiveness, they call on school districts to spend their SDFS dollars for "research-based" programs. Modzeleski says the principles "are going to improve the quality of overall programming."[69] Maybe, maybe not. The department regulations, for example, state that qualifying programs are not only those with a record of effectiveness, but also those with a *"promise of effectiveness"* (emphasis added). Even more problematic is that the SDFS program was in existence for over a decade before any such principles were put forward. This belated attempt at corrective action does not inspire hope that similar shortcomings will be addressed in an expeditious manner.

How To Fix It

While the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program has the potential to contribute to the national crusade against youth drug use, at the moment it is handicapped by numerous shortcomings. President Clinton's announcement that his administration intends to "overhaul" it indicates an interest in correcting these shortcomings. But whether this overhaul will strike at the fundamental problems, and whether it will produce the necessary changes, remain to be seen.

As noted at the beginning of this paper, one of the key questions for lawmakers is precisely how they want the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program to work. Currently, the funding arrangements include the worst features of both a block grant and a categorical program. To make the policy work, policymakers should convert the program into either one or the other.

The theory of block grants rests on two fundamental tenets. The first is the belief that states (or localities) can do for themselves better than the federal government can do for them. Because states differ, a 'one-size-fits-all' program directed from Washington is inherently doomed to inefficiency in some states and insufficiency in others. Block grants allow states to use their first-hand knowledge to develop superior solutions tailored to their own circumstances.

The other tenet of block granting is—or should be—results-based accountability. States are given program funds with few strings attached—except for the requirement that they show results. Devolving control over the SDFS program to the states while simultaneously requiring that they disclose the data that will reveal whether their policies are working shifts the focus to outcomes. This strategy lets the marketplace of politics and public opinion do the regulating.

For the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program to turn into a true block grant, there are two practical options. One is to include all SDFS funds in a grant that goes to states for multi-purpose education spending, with no requirement that these dollars be spent on drug- or violence-prevention programs. This would allow states where violence and drugs pose a major problem (such as inner-city school districts) to spend more to prevent and solve that problem. It gives communities where drugs and violence are less worrisome the opportunity

to devote the federal dollars to other education endeavors. This option endows states with the responsibility both for determining their priorities and for selecting the best strategies for achieving them. One condition of the grant, however, would be to require states to file regular reports to Washington on how the money was actually spent. To hold states fully accountable for the wise use of an education block grant, states could also be required to report on student achievement or other indicators of educationally desirable results.

The other block grant option for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program would be to mandate that its funds be used for drug-prevention programs, while giving state and local officials complete freedom to spend the money as they see fit. In this case, the federal government would decide the general purpose of the expenditure while leaving the type of expenditure up to the state. In exchange for this freedom, however, states would be required to report regularly on the incidence of drug use among their youth.

One way to guarantee that fewer students are attending schools where drugs and violence are prevalent is to allow students assigned to such schools to transfer out of them.

If, on the other hand, the SDFS program is to be funded with categorical grants, lawmakers ought to consider seriously overhauling it in the following ways (going from least to most radical):

Increased accountability. More specific information should be gathered on a more timely and regular basis from state and local education agencies about how they're actually using their SDFS grant money. Instead of asking states to file reports once every three years concerning the effectiveness of their Safe and Drug-Free School spending, this should be made into an annual requirement. There must also be more frequent program audits by the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Education. One way of guaranteeing that prevention programs are working would be to mandate that a certain percentage of the grant money going to states, localities, and governors, be set aside for the purpose of evaluating the programs.

Curriculum reform. The recently imposed requirement that local education agencies only use "research-based" curricula when teaching drug and violence prevention is an encouraging step, but it does not go far enough. More information must be made available to state and local education agencies about successful curricula, and more efforts must be made to weed out untested programs. While curriculum limits will likely infringe on state and local flexibility, the experience of the past ten years suggests that continued flexibility will only result in more spending on untested prevention programs.

Get back to drug prevention. As the only federal anti-drug program exclusively targeting schools, the importance of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act cannot be gainsaid. Yet, as this paper has documented, much of the spending is now on activities and services that have little, or nothing, to do with educating kids about the dangers of drugs.

Lawmakers should consider tightening up the program's regulations so as to end the ill-advised practice of allowing spending in vaguely defined and semi-related areas, such as health education. As detailed earlier, Congress's 1994 decision to permit spending on health

education retroactively was designed to protect individuals in Michigan who stood accused of mismanaging their state's SDFS money. Yet spending on health education will continue to be permitted, says Modzeleski, "provided there is a connection, a tie-in, back to the overall goal of the legislation."[70] He adds that violence is beginning to be studied as a public-health issue, and says that attempts to treat it as such "could clearly be paid for under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program."[71]

The danger in this is that local officials can justify *all* forms of health spending as designed to control drug use, just as Michigan officials did. If the SDFS program is to succeed, its focus should be returned exclusively to its original goal: drug-abuse prevention. Health education is not without merit, but there are numerous other federal programs that cover this topic. There's no argument for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program to be sidetracked in this way too.

Increase funding. This may seem problematic in light of all the program defects spelled out above, but there is a place for the federal government to be involved in spreading the drug-prevention message to youth. Often, that message is not being delivered the right way. Moreover, spending on message delivery has dwindled owing to the expansion of the original Drug-Free Schools program to include health education, violence prevention, and a host of other activities. One simple way of increasing SDFS spending would be to bring under its auspices some, or all, of the seventy other federal programs delivering drug- and violence-prevention education of various kinds. (The Department of Education administers forty-eight of these programs, with the remaining twenty-two spread among ten federal agencies.) A 1997 GAO report made the obvious yet important point that "multiple programs dispersed among several agencies creates the potential for inefficient services and ineffective use of funds."[72]

A funding hike would address one of the most frequently heard complaints about the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program: that school districts are allocated too little money to undertake any serious prevention efforts. According to Modzeleski, 59 percent of all local school districts receive less than $10,000 annually in SDFS grant money.[73]

The caveat in any funding hikes, or consolidation, is that the money must be spent appropriately. Before any budget increases are considered, lawmakers must be assured that at least some of the recommendations suggested above have already been adopted—specifically the guarantee that any anti-drug curriculum used in SDFS-funded prevention programs have a proven track record at curtailing youth drug use.

Expand school choice. One way to guarantee that fewer students are attending schools where drugs and violence are prevalent is to allow students assigned to such schools to transfer out of them. Congress should consider legislating this reform by inserting language into the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act mandating—or at least permitting—school choice for students who have either been victimized by crime at their school or, better yet, who face a genuine threat of becoming a school-based crime victim.

Transfer responsibility out of the Department of Education. When the SDFS program was enacted in 1986, it was part of a national anti-drug crusade. Any reforms to the program should return it to those roots, and one way of doing that would be to hand it over to an agency that focuses on drug-prevention efforts (i.e., the Justice Department, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, or the Drug Enforcement Administration). The senior ranks of the U.S. Department of Education—the people who now influence the administration of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program—have done little to demonstrate they can successfully carry out a federal anti-drug campaign. Indeed, the perils of administering drug-prevention efforts through people trained as educators was highlighted by a recent survey, conducted on behalf of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, that found half of all teachers and principals believing teenagers can use marijuana every weekend and still succeed in school.[74] These data, coupled with the failures to demand any meaningful reforms to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, argue that the program be transferred out of the Department of Education.

Family Matters

In determining how much money to allocate to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program, and dictating how such monies should be spent, members of Congress and the administration must keep in mind one important fact: no matter how much tinkering they do, there are limits to what can be achieved, as there will always be factors other than school-based prevention programs influencing whether students decide to experiment with illegal drugs. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse study found a direct correlation between teen drug use and the time spent with their parents. Among students aged twelve to seventeen, the study found that 12 percent who eat dinner with their parents six times a week smoked marijuana, compared with 35 percent for those whose shared dinner experiences occurred just twice a week. The study also found a direct correlation between participation in religious services and teen drug use; the more regular their churchgoing, the less likely they are to use drugs.[75] These conclusions mirror the sentiments expressed by Ronald Reagan in the speech he delivered just before signing the bill creating the Drug-Free Schools program: "We would be fooling ourselves if we thought that new money for new government programs alone will solve the problem. Let's not forget that in America people solve problems, and no national crusade has ever succeeded without human interest."[76]

That said, there is clearly a place for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program in educating students about the perils of drug use. But if the program is to succeed, it would behoove lawmakers to clarify its mission. Doing so would send a much needed signal that Washington is committed to curtailing youth drug use—and understands the perils associated with inaction.

---

1 "Remarks on Signing the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986," Public Papers of the President, 27 October 1986.

2 Judith Havemann, "Reagan Signs Antidrug Bill," *Washington Post*, 28 October 1986.

3 "Remarks on Signing the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986," Public Papers of the President, 27 October 1986.

4 "Remarks by President Bill Clinton to White House Conference on School Safety," *Federal News Service*, 15 October 1998.

[5] "Creating Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools," Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 15 October 1998.

[6] "Fast Start Sought on Drug Program," *New York Times*, 28 November 1986.

[7] "*Monitoring the Future*," (University of Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1998).

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Remarks by President Bill Clinton at the Drug-Free Schools Recognition Event," *Federal News Service*, 7 June 1995.

[10] Robin Frames, "Hispanic Voters Targeted," *Albuquerque Journal*, 2 November 1996.

[11] "Remarks in Forth Worth, Texas," Public Papers of the President, 27 September 1996.

[12] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey on Schools Violence*, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education - FRSS 63, 1997).

[13] *Back to School 1998—National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse: Teens, Teachers and Principals*, conducted by The Luntz Research Companies (New York: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, September, 1998).

[14] U.S. Department of Education - FRSS 63 (1997).

[15] Interview with author.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "Fast Start Sought on Drug Program," *New York Times*, 28 November 1986.

[20] Ralph Frammolino, "Failing Grade for Safe Schools Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 September 1998.

[21] Carlotta C. Joyner, *Safe and Drug Free Schools—Balancing Accountability with State and Local Flexibility*, (Washington DC: General Accounting Office, 10 October 1997).

[22] Interview with author.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Joyner (1997).

[25] Ibid.

[26] E. Suyapa Silvia & ChristeneTashjian, *Characteristics of Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act: Summary of the 1993-95 State Biennial Performance Reports*, Final Report (North Carolina: Research Triangle Institute, 1998), 2-9.

[27] Joyner (1997).

[28] Jack Welborn, *Michigan Department of Education's Management of Federal Drug Free School and Communities Act Funds*, Final Report, (Family Law, Mental Health and Corrections Committee, Michigan State Senate, 29 December 1994).

[29] Robert Peterson, *Senate Testimony and Final Drug Education Report*, 12 October 1993.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Interview with author.

[32] Peterson, (1993).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Interview with author.

[36] Peterson (1993). Comparative and longitudinal data relating Michigan statistics to national trends not available.

[37] Interview with author.

[38] Joyner (1997).

[39] *Audit of the District of Columbia Public Schools' Administration of the Safe Schools Grant*, (Philadelphia: Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, January 1998).

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] *Safe and Drug Free Schools: Increasing Accountability and Preserving Flexibility*, (Philadelphia: Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Education, December 1998).

[44] Ibid., 1.

[45] Ibid., 2.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 23.

[48] Ibid., 17.

[49] Kerry DiGrazia, "City youths go to White House to save anti-drug program," *The Baltimore Sun*, 10 August 1995.

[50] Damon Hodge, "Actors Promote Deaf Awareness in Schools," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 22 October 1997.

[51] Frammolino, *Los Angeles Times*, 6 September 1998.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[52] Sec. 4132, sec. b—20 U.S.C 123a says the Department of Education cannot exercise "any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials."

[53] William B. Hansen and Patrick M. O'Malley, "Drug Use," in Ralph J. DiClemente, William B. Hansen, , and Lynn E. Ponton, *Handbook of Adolescent Health Risk Behavior*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 184-85.

[54] Delbert Elliott, *Blueprints for Violence Prevention and Reduction: Identification and Documentation of Successful Program*, (Boulder: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998), 3.

[55] E. Suyapa Silvia & Judy Thorne, *School-Based Drug Prevention Programs: A Longitudinal Study in Selected Districts* (North Carolina: Research Triangle Institute, 1997), E-23.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Gina Kolata, "Experts Are at Odds on How Best to Tackle Rise in Teen-Agers' Drug Use," *New York Times*, 18 September 1996.

[58] Suyapa and Thorne (1997), E-25.

[59] Interview with author.

[60] Sarah Glazer, "Preventing Teen Drug Use", *Congressional Quarterly* 5 no.28 (1995), 663.

[61] Suyapa and Thorne, Final Report (1997), 4-62

[62] Denise C. Gottfredson, "School-Based Crime Prevention," in *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1997), 5-33.

[63] Ibid., 5-34.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Silvia and Tashjian (1998), 2-5.

[66] http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/cfda184.html.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Author's interview with a press official, U.S. Department of Education.

[69] Interview with author.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Joyner (1997).

[73] Interview with author.

[74] *Back to School 1998*.

[75] Ibid.

[76] "Remarks on Signing the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986," Public Papers of the President, 27 October 1986.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

School-to-Work: Right Problem, Wrong Solution

Carol Innerst

Many who enter the workforce straight from high school lack the skills needed to succeed there. To remedy this, Congress passed the School-to-Work Opportunities Act in 1994. Its goal is to promote career awareness and job training for students of all ages. Because such activities displace academic instruction, the program has been criticized for allowing business interests to weaken the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Rather than targeting the program at students who are headed directly to the workplace, School-to-Work activities are often universal. The experience with STW demonstrates that Washington is better at identifying problems than devising solutions.

By integrating academic and vocational curricula, STW is supposed to make coursework more interesting and academically rigorous for work-bound students and, at the same time, more practical for the college-bound.

Introduction and Summary

The School-to-Work Program (STW) was launched in 1994, prompted by fears that America will lose its competitive edge in the global economy unless the job skills and productivity of its workforce are dramatically upgraded. The Clinton administration's response to these fears was to sponsor legislation promoting career-awareness programs and job training for all students. Congress, long accustomed to supporting vocational education and job training for disadvantaged populations, was receptive to this proposal. The resulting School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 allocates $2.3 billion over five years to a program ostensibly aimed at expanding vocational education opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged students and those in danger of leaving school early.[1]

STW provides federal grants to states and communities to develop partnerships between schools and local businesses. These partnerships create curricula that use the classroom to prepare students for the workplace by allowing them to explore various careers and develop skills in work-based learning experiences.

The program's advocates hope to increase student access to good vocational or technical training opportunities, reduce drop-out rates, and improve achievement for all learners through the pedagogy of "applied" or "contextual" learning—all with an eye toward enlarging

and upgrading the skilled labor force in the United States as unskilled jobs move south and overseas.

Much of today's lively opposition to STW is based on the belief that the federal government should not be dictating curriculum. Many critics are alarmed by the way in which the STW curriculum is seeping into schools without a vote by the school board or involvement of parents. Other critics find justification for a federal role but are troubled by a one-size-fits-all plan that, in effect, requires every child to become a vocational student and subtracts valuable time from core academic subjects. In fact, those who favor a broad, liberal education for all students have faulted the whole idea of vocational education. These critics are concerned that merging the vocational and academic tracks (as STW does) will result in a watered-down education for *all* students.

The STW program is slated to sunset in 1999 but could get new life if Congress decides to reauthorize it.[2] Currently, neither the administration nor Congress has signaled much interest in doing that and recent federal budgets and appropriations seem to assume that funding for this program will be phased out. A recent evaluation by Mathematica Policy Research concluded that STW does not stand a strong chance of surviving, largely because it is not perceived as integral to raising academic standards.[3]

Those who sponsored this legislation may have meant well, but the implementation of the program went badly awry. Designed for students likely to drop out of school altogether, STW has been imposed on states and districts in a way that requires all students to participate. Not only are college-bound students receiving watered-down curricula, but scarce funds are also being diverted from those pupils who are at greatest risk and stand to benefit the most from such a program. This paper analyzes these issues and reviews a range of questions about the program, including: have taxpayers received value for their money from STW? Has it served to improve educational opportunity and outcomes for students who are headed straight from school to work? And what will be left behind when the legislation sunsets?

History

The idea that the job skills and productivity of American workers need dramatic upgrading took hold after a 1990 report entitled "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages" was released by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE).[4] This report predicted that, by the year 2000, more than 70 percent of U.S. jobs will not require a college education. It also asserted that the productivity of the workers in these non-college jobs would make or break the nation's economic future and have a drastic impact on those workers' standard of living.

The NCEE report contained recommendations for the seven out of ten students who do not embark on a four-year college degree upon completing high school. The key proposal was to establish comprehensive, job-specific, training and certification programs to "professionalize" non-college occupations. Learning would take place in school and on the job, much like the German apprenticeship system.

This was followed in 1991 by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report, entitled "What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000."[5] It identified necessary employment skills and established employee proficiency levels in a multitude of job classifications.

The Clinton administration answered with a plan to increase career awareness and job training for all K-12 students. This plan became the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act. In addition to the basic aim of preparing students for the workforce, it seeks to draw women and minorities into "non-traditional" careers and to advance cooperative learning. Other legislation passed in the same year promotes STW goals. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the National Skills Standards Act of 1994 call for states to modify their curricula to provide work-related learning and also authorize a board to certify occupational skills.

In its introductory "legislative findings" for the STW Act, Congress noted the dire economic prospects for at-risk students and drop-outs and echoed the dual concerns of the NCEE report: that most high-school students enter the workforce without bachelor's degrees and that many lack the skills needed to succeed in the changing U. S. workplace and keep the nation economically competitive.

The School-to-Work Philosophy

By integrating academic and vocational curricula, STW is supposed to make coursework more interesting and academically rigorous for work-bound students and, at the same time, more practical for the college-bound.

Most educators agree that traditional "voc ed" could stand an infusion of rigor. "Vocational education went down the tubes for about ten years and became a dumping grounds," said Leon Hawkins, a retired assistant principal who is now a substitute math and science teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County, Virginia.[6]

Most educators agree that traditional "voc ed" could stand an infusion of rigor.

Instead of just raising standards for students not headed to college, however, STW expects schools to change the way their teachers teach and, indeed, the content of what they teach. "The whole idea behind School-to-Work is to improve students' academic performance by making learning more relevant to real-life, real-work situations," Labor Secretary Alexis Herman told *Investor's Business Daily*.[7] Venturing into pedagogy, Congress stated in its "Legislative Findings" for STW that many young people "learn better and retain more when the students learn in context, rather than in the abstract."

Supporters note that "contextual" or "applied" learning, which is a cornerstone of the STW effort to reform the curriculum, has been successful with low skill adults and high-school students unable to grasp abstract concepts. "A lot of research says kids that learn by doing are able to accumulate a greater amount of knowledge than they can learn from books, and books go out of date quickly," said Sandy Hargas, STW coordinator in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.[8]

Many who support STW believe that college-bound students who have traditionally learned through the "chalk-and-talk" method can also benefit from the hands-on, contextual learning typically used with low ability students. The federal STW office touts the program on its Website as "a new approach to learning for all students ... based on the proven concept that education works best and is most useful for future careers when students apply what they learn to real life, real work situations."[9] By putting all students on the STW track, the program is also supposed to eliminate the caste system that separates the college prep "elite" from lower status students in vocational education.

Implementing STW

Traditionally, Washington extracts compliance by sending the states funds with strings attached. STW is no exception. Funded jointly by the Departments of Education and Labor, it provides federal "venture capital" to states and communities to foster school and business partnerships that are meant to develop a skilled workforce. To spur state activity, the federal government offered each state whose governor submitted an application a "development grant" of up to $1 million. All states sought and received these grants. To take the next step and obtain an implementation grant, the state must submit a formal plan to the federal government. Besides the Governor, a state's STW plan must involve the agencies responsible for K-12 education, economic development, employment, job training, post-secondary education, vocational education and vocational rehabilitation, as well as the officials assigned to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, various officials connected with the Job-Training Partnership Act, and representatives of the private sector.

If there were a region where STW might make greatest sense, it would be in Indiana County [Pennsylvania], an area of high unemployment in the heart of Pennsylvania's depressed coal region.

The first round of implementation grants, totaling $43 million, went to eight states: Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Wisconsin. These states, which later received $87 million in second-year funding, were identified as farthest along in developing STW systems and are considered models for other jurisdictions.

The legislation requires states to use 70 to 90 percent of their STW grants for subgrants to local STW partnerships.[10] These must meet twenty-three federal requirements, including a "description of how vocational training and academic instruction will be integrated, a process for awarding skill certificates and a plan to sustain the system when federal funds have been exhausted." The local partnerships must develop plans and rewrite school curricula to make the lessons learned in K–12 classrooms relevant and responsive to workplace needs. The state plan is subject to review and approval by the U.S. Department of Education. The state may use its share of the funds (after the 70-90 percent is sent to localities) to design or adapt model curricula and to develop career awareness and exploration activities such as job site visits and mentoring that build positive work attitudes and general employability. By the end of 1998, forty-four states

had formed 1,081 local school-to-work partnerships that provided services to geographic areas containing 36,000 schools and 18 million students.[11]

Most STW programs build on infrastructures already put in place for earlier federal vocational programs such as TechPrep, which also emerged as a response to the "High Skills or Low Wages" report. TechPrep was part of the 1990 Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act and provided students with coordinated curricula during their last two years of high school and first two years of college, leading to an associate degree as well as a high-school diploma.

Four-year-college oriented students and their parents were leery of TechPrep and steered clear of it. However TechPrep, which spawned thousands of local partnerships dedicated to linking school and work, provided the foundation upon which STW was built. STW expands TechPrep by extending business involvement to include employment, training, labor, and community organizations, by significantly enlarging the affected student populations, and by adding skill certificates.[12] Although the STW legislation does not require it, schools in some states are organizing curricula into four or six TechPrep-like "career clusters" and asking students to select a field as early as eighth or ninth grade.

To prepare students for the workplace, the STW Act supports: (1) high academic standards; (2) integration of school and work based learning; and (3) partnerships among schools, employers, post-secondary education and communities.

Every state and local School-to-Work system must integrate school-based learning with work-based learning. The school-based part should include classroom instruction based on high academic and occupational skill standards. The work-based component must include career exploration, work experience, workplace mentoring and instruction, and activities related to developing positive work attitudes and employability. The legislation encourages, though it does not mandate, paid work experience, job shadowing, school-sponsored enterprises and on-the-job training.

The most serious School-to-Work activities occur at the high-school level where school-based, student-run enterprises and community service opportunities offer "real world" learning experiences in which intensive training programs target the needs of local employers and "academies" or schools-within-schools feature employer involvement in curriculum as well as internships with local businesses.

School-to-Work in Action

Pennsylvania embraced STW early. The state received $32.6 million in federal STW funding through 1997. If there were a region where STW might make greatest sense, it would be in Indiana County, an area of high unemployment in the heart of Pennsylvania's depressed coal region.[13] Many parents have been unemployed and on welfare since the mines shut down. Local educators and business leaders fear that, without exposure to a diverse range of careers through STW, future generations will follow their parents to the welfare rolls.

Indiana County's STW Partnership received a $194,420 federal grant in 1997-98 and provided another $61,720 in matching funds and $68,000 for partnership meetings. Matching funds came from state and local sources, staff time shifted from other vocational programs, and business donations. Educators and businesses are thrilled with Indiana County's STW program and hang many hopes on it. "Students need to realize that high-paying coal mining jobs don't exist anymore," said Joseph F. Marcoline, superintendent of the Homer-Center School District in Indiana County. "We don't have a broad, diversified workforce. Talk about an airline pilot, a stock broker or an investment banker would be foreign to these kids."

"We're concerned about the unemployment rate, poverty, and making ourselves a thriving community," said Robert Maracus, a vice president of the local Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the Indiana County STW Partnership. "There's an 8 to 12 percent unemployment rate here compared with just 2 percent in eastern Pennsylvania. We had to become serious about school relating to careers. We're not training for specific jobs. It's a matter of being aware. Our district is making tools available for students to better prepare for the world. It doesn't pigeonhole them."

One tool that Indiana County STW uses is a computer software program called "Choices." Each copy of the program costs $800 and its purchase for all the schools accounted for the bulk of the $10,400 in STW grant money allocated for textbooks and software in 1997. Indiana County has expended its budget on a range of other items including: $70-a-day stipends for teachers to devote time during the summer to becoming acquainted with the work of various area companies; $750 for substitute teachers who fill in while regular teachers attended STW workshops; $8,000 for staff development; $15,000 on marketing to create an "awareness" plan and $12,000 on travel for teachers to attend conferences. They consider it money well spent. "It's important to get kids to think about careers," says Vince Palilla, industry liaison with the STW Partnership. "It's too expensive to go to college to prepare for one thing and then change your mind," he says.

STW is Indiana County's second stab at career preparation for all. Several years back the push was on TechPrep, but reactions to that program were negative due to "miscommunication," says Barbara Pominek, a curriculum coordinator with Indiana Area School District. "We are a college preparatory district with many parents connected with Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The idea met with resistance from the college parents. They said we were preparing kids for work. That's not what this is all about. We tried three years and nobody signed up."

It seems that lessons were learned from the TechPrep experience. "Parents looked at it from the point of whether the child was going to a four-year college and that was the end of it," said Carol Jean Fry, STW coordinator. "We realized [TechPrep] wasn't working so we embedded [STW] in the curriculum—not as a program, but a philosophy—and we call it School-to-Career. STW is not a program, so it can happen without kids knowing it."

Each school district in Indiana County has a STW coordinating team. The bulk of the STW money is spent for staff development and marketing mailings. It also pays for teams of teach-

ers to be trained in portfolio-style pupil assessments and in the "Choices" computer software that allows students to match their budding interests with different careers.

Fry keeps the STW machinery running. She has a master's degree in vocational education from the University of Pittsburgh and taught marketing and business classes for fourteen years in Pittsburgh's suburbs. Her job description says she serves the county, but as testimony to the tortuous meanderings of federal education funding, her salary is actually funded from three different grants.

One facet of STW is called "Educators in the Workplace." This places teachers in settings where they see practical applications of their classroom lessons. The program allows participating teachers to give their students a glimpse into the workplace. After her summer participation in "Educators in the Workplace" at Best Western University Inn, teacher Mary Keith developed a lesson plan for her students on "Getting Along with People." Students classified positive and negative personality traits on a Hospitality Attitude Chart and, for homework, made a list of things they could do to show an attitude of hospitality at home and at school.[14]

We have job openings, but it's hard to get people when they can't fill out the application, can't multiply and can't read a ruler.

Renée Lash, teacher at Purchase Line South Elementary School, spent five days at Ambulance Service Management Corporation. Her experience inspired two field trips for K-6 students to learn about emergency services in the surrounding area.[15]

Greensteel Inc., a local business, has become an enthusiastic supporter of STW after opening its plant to a student tour a couple of years ago.[16] "We hire through the schools," says Mona Irwin, Greensteel's personnel manager. "Right now, four students who will graduate are working in our office doing estimating, purchasing and shipping." The business, which manufactures marker boards, uses computer technology to engineer the final designs that go into production. Greensteel became involved in the STW Partnership after seeing too many unqualified youngsters seeking summer jobs. "It was amazing how many kids couldn't read a ruler," Irwin said. "Some will come in and ask if they can take the application home and fill it out—a sure sign that they are barely literate."

"We have job openings," said general manager J. Bryan Crosby, "but it's hard to get people when they can't fill out the application, can't multiply and can't read a ruler. One boy thought on his application that references meant books he'd read in high school. Students have to know how to read, write and do math to a certain level."

Starting out Early

Just how far are the federal government and public schools willing to go to prepare each and every student for a niche in the twenty-first century workplace? In Spring 1998, STW enthusiasts in a western Pennsylvania elementary school gave first graders a taste of what it is like to work on a factory assembly line.[17]

Positioned at tables, hands encased in plastic gloves and wielding plastic knives, twenty-one six-year-olds at Purchase Line South Elementary School in Commodore, Pennsylvania, formed three assembly lines to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the class. Logan Lawson was clear about his task. "I'm going to put the bread on the plate." "Then what?" asked an observer. "Pass it down to Matt," Logan answered. Matt Ritchie added a second piece of bread to the paper plate and passed it on down the line to Kayla Huey, who spread a dollop of peanut butter on one slice of bread, and passed the plate on to the jelly man, Damian Findley. Harley Lomaster took it from there. His job was to stick the two pieces of bread together and pass them to Dustin Pritchet. Dustin cut the sandwich in half and gave it to Luke Reefer, who made a second cut to quarter it.

Not everything went according to plan. One assembly line got bogged down early when its peanut butter man, his hand-eye coordination still immature, proved stingy with the peanut butter and then had trouble spreading a knifepoint of it on the first slice of bread that came his way. Classroom aides saved the day and got enough peanut butter on the bread to keep his co-workers from going hungry. Matt and Kayla said they wouldn't mind working on an assembly line all day if they got to eat the sandwiches when they were finished. It's gospel that businesses want their workers to be good team players, so the exercise also required the children to work cooperatively. They were assessed on how well they interacted with others.

In another School-to-Work lesson for the just-out-of-the-sandbox set, kindergartners in Newburgh Enlarged City School District in Newburgh, N. Y. got to "pilot" airplanes. With the help of nearby Stewart International Airport, the district created a simulated airport complete with an air traffic controller station, flight simulator, and ticketing counter. High tech enabled the children to "pilot" planes for make-believe Air Bear Airlines.

"If young people can picture themselves in successful career roles in the future, they will aspire to reach that goal," enthused Annette Saturnelli, director of science for the Newburgh district, in an STW promotional brochure mailed to federal program administrators by Tro Learning, Inc. of Edina, Minnesota.

Unintended Consequences of STW

A number of issues have arisen during implementation of STW that have seriously undermined its creators' intentions and jeopardized its future. Education Department staff have interpreted the legislation to mean that it is compulsory for EVERY student to participate. This interpretation has sparked concern that STW activities are displacing instruction in core academic areas and that curricula are being dumbed down for every student in an attempt to eliminate tracking. Some are uncomfortable with the influence that business interests have brought to bear on the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Further, in some places Washington has implemented STW against the wishes of legislators and state education boards by turning funds over to governors who then pass the funds along to local partnerships between schools and businesses.

1. The program compels ALL students to participate in workforce training

The authorizing legislation says that STW must "provide participating students with the opportunity to complete career majors" and "provide all students with equal access to the full range of program components." It calls for "initial selection by interested students of a career major not later than the beginning of the eleventh grade."

The antecedent idea, under President Bush, was to broaden opportunities for students who didn't want to pursue a four-year-college degree. STW would allow them to end up in college if they so desired, but if they knew they were unlikely to go to college, it afforded them an opportunity to gain valuable experience in job fields while still in high school. STW was seen as a way to keep at-risk youngsters in school and interested, according to congressional aides familiar with its evolution.[18]

Some educators are concerned that students must choose a career path so early in their school careers.

One aide cited a glowing example of federal STW funds at work at Pennsylvania's York Area Vocational-Technical School where a student who would never have considered taking trigonometry became interested in the subject once it was tied to a computerized drafting course and its relevance to a real job became obvious. Importantly, this was a choice made by the student. The Clinton administration, however, has pushed a policy that all students should go through STW and should declare a career major early in their high-school years. There is no evidence that this was ever the intent of Congress.

Although the legislation uses the phrase "all students," it also states that this phrase encompasses those who are disadvantaged, from diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, have disabilities, speak a language other than English, dropped out of school or are academically talented. Said a House aide who was privy to the drafting process,

> 'All' students was discussed as an 'access' opportunity. It was to be seen as a high academic path and the opposite of what people were afraid of—dumbing down—a way to pull up vocational education. But it was always something kids and parents would choose. 'All' students never meant every kid would be placed in a school-to-work program. We never dreamed 'all' would be interpreted in that way. There wasn't enough money and we were afraid 'all' would become an entitlement. But some people in the Clinton administration and in the states have interpreted the 'all students' to mean that kids *have* to participate in STW.[19]

The result is a gap between what Congress thought it had wrought in the Schools-to-Work Opportunities Act and how states and local jurisdictions (nudged by executive branch officials) have been carrying it out. It is STW's supposed mandate to retool schooling for all students—not just those who expect to go directly from high school to work—that has made it so controversial among parents.

Even staunch STW supporter Stephen F. Hamilton of Cornell University seems uncomfortable about the push to mandate it for all students. "The greatest need for STW is among

those young people who are not on a college path," says Hamilton, professor and chairman of the department of human development and family studies at Cornell, and author of *Apprenticeship for Adulthood: Preparing Youth for the Future*. He explains,

> Part of the rationale for broadening STW to include all students or at least be optional for all students was difficulty in identifying kids who would need it. Also to avoid stigmatizing kids. This country has a long history of creating programs for the 'most needy' with accompanying stigma. My preference would be to say everybody ought to have the 'opportunity' to participate in STW.[20]

Some educators are concerned that students must choose a career path so early in their school careers. New York Commissioner of Education Richard Mills has himself proposed that all high-school students be required to declare academic or career majors and pick a specialty in a field like art, science, or business in addition to taking a core curriculum in basic courses. But Patricia McLeod, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction in Middletown, N.Y., said she was not sure all students are mature enough to choose a specialty in high school. "There are college students who go for four or five years and can't declare a major," she said. "Prior to students specializing in anything, they need to be exposed to a broad spectrum of subjects," she told the *Times Herald Record*.[21] "The worst idea in the world is to say what you want to major in at college before you get there, or to say what you want to do with your life before you experience college," argues Alexander Moe, a 1998 graduate of Virginia's Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology.[22]

2. *Displaces academic instruction in core areas*

A sure sign that something is wrong in STW-land is evidenced by the fact that criticism of the program comes from so many directions. Liberals and conservatives alike have expressed concern that STW retreats from the idea that schools should, first and foremost, produce well-rounded, literate individuals. Critics argue that a program meant to upgrade vocational education—particularly for disadvantaged and at-risk youths—instead appears to steal valuable class time from academics at the lower grades and dumbs down the traditional liberal arts curriculum taken by college-track students during their high-school years.

The peanut butter and jelly assembly line and Air Bears Airline were fun for their juvenile participants, but given the dismal test scores that most American pupils have posted the past couple of decades, not everyone is thrilled with the idea of using scarce time to let young children pretend to pilot an airplane or work on a sandwich assembly line. Many agree with Robin De Jarnette, government relations aide for the Richmond-based Family Foundation, that kindergartners and first graders are better off spending class time on phonics and reading skills in order to become literate citizens than in "trying out different jobs."[23]

In displacing a basic skills and liberal arts curriculum to make room for vocational training for all, STW may also deprive disadvantaged students of core knowledge and academic skills that would at least bring them up to the level of their more advantaged peers.

Author Jonathan Kozol recently emerged as an unlikely ally of STW critics when he made this very point. In a September 1998 article about Kozol in the National Council of Teachers of English *Council Chronicle*, the outspoken champion of public schooling expressed concerns about STW. The school-to-work trend in urban education, Kozol said, "shifts emphasis away from genuinely intellectual preparation to training students for entry-level jobs. I see so many schools in the inner cities now where students don't read genuine literature any longer ... If they get any written work at all, it tends to be the kind of mechanistic work that would be useful to a corporation but that has no connection with our literary or moral heritage. Students at high schools in upper middle-class neighborhoods don't waste time learning how to go for job interviews," he continued, "they're reading John Donne, Walt Whitman, and not just one Toni Morrison novel but six or seven."[24]

Asked what should be the primary role of K-12 schooling, 65 percent of business respondents said, "Provide a broad, academic education." Only 30 percent said, "Train with specific skills for future work."

Much the same criticism is heard from the right. Education analyst Mark Wilson of the Heritage Foundation calls STW "a symptom of our failed federal experiment in education."[25] The real problem, he says, "is an educational atmosphere of low expectations, dumbed-down academics, and controversial values. The difficulty that students have in going from high school to work or college would disappear if educational reforms focused on strengthening the core curricula, setting high expectations, and enabling local educators to improve discipline. If our primary and secondary schools concentrate on improving in these key areas instead of devoting scarce resources to interagency collaboration and the formation of local partnerships, future high school graduates will be well prepared for any entry level job, apprenticeship program, or college."

Although America's STW plan is often said to be copied from the German apprenticeship model, William G. Durden, former executive director of the Institute for the Academic Advancement of Youth at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, observes that the German Dual System works in part because students must perform well in traditional schoolwork even before the program begins.[26]

That schoolwork includes core courses in math, sciences, German language and literature, history, and foreign languages at least to the equivalent of ninth or tenth grade in American schools. At the end of middle school, all German students, regardless of their intended academic track, must possess the necessary knowledge and skills to solve problems in everyday life and to satisfy the further educational requirements of a technical school or university.

According to Durden,

> [A]ll American ninth graders would be hard put to reach these German standards of academic achievement by the end of ninth or tenth grade ... and yet the success of the German school to work initiative in large part ensues from the rigorous knowledge and skill base expected of all students before they enter into apprenticeships, ... If this

gap is not closed, the applicability of the STW program for international competitiveness in the workplace will never be achieved.[27]

Durden believes that the challenge for Americans is to make the learning experience through ninth and tenth grade more substantial so that STW-type initiatives would then become truly useful.

3. *Places business interests first*

The business community, which spends some $30 billion a year to retrain workers, is understandably enthusiastic about STW. They hope that the program can provide a pool of job-ready hiring prospects, thereby saving employers the considerable cost of training people. But critics of STW, such as Eagle Forum President Phyllis Schlafly, view the school-to-career approach as a deterministic, big-brotherish "plan to train children for specific jobs to serve the workforce and the global economy instead of educate them so they can make their own life choices ... It's not the job of taxpayers to do job training" she argues. "That's the job of the corporations that hire them."[28]

Not so, argues J.D. Hoye, former director of the National School-to-Work Office in Washington, D.C., who says that "School-to-Work is not—and has never been—about specific job training ... some people are still demanding we 'return to the basics.' The problem is that the basics for the 21st Century are not the same as they were for the 20th Century."[29]

Despite the view in some quarters that the student will become a "human resource" to fill the needs of the workforce, what enhances STW's appeal to proponents, such as the National Alliance of Business, is its promise for moving America's working-class into higher paid jobs as new skills and technology blend to boost productivity.[30] But another concern of STW critics is that, while the rhetoric of the STW movement often refers to a "high performance workplace," few employers of young people currently meet that definition. Millions of adolescents continue to gain their first work experience where they always have, in low skill, minimum wage workplaces such as the fast food and retail shops that continue to proliferate across the landscape.[31]

Giving some credence to skeptics who believe that STW is more about moving students into low skill than high tech jobs, the *Wall Street Journal* pointed out that some STW partnerships appear to be better deals for employers than for students.[32] For example, Plano Senior High School (north of Dallas) sends eight to ten students to the Clarion Hotel each morning to file papers, dip strawberries in chocolate, and perform other such duties. Instead of pay, the students receive class credit. Plano senior, Sarah Kettelhut, says it beats studying geometry and anyway, she aspires to be a chef.

The reporter described a variety of job training activities going on in Texas high schools. One classroom in Irving High School is decorated to resemble a travel agency and students are learning to use AMR Corp's Sabre reservation system. Concerned about a shortage of travel reservation agents, Sabre began licensing its system to high schools two years ago. After

completing the course, one student found work using the Sabre system at Cendant Corp. It pays $7.25 an hour plus bonuses based on the number of reservations she books.

A Boeing Manufacturing TechPrep program in Wichita trains students to work on Boeing assembly lines for two summers, starting after their junior year. After that, the student is expected to have a good shot at a permanent job at the plant.

The zero sum argument over "education" versus "job training" goals is fueled by STW documentation. For example, the STW partnership group for southwestern Pennsylvania, a coalition of business, education, and community leaders, shares a vision that "all youth in southwestern Pennsylvania will be prepared with the content knowledge, learning-to-learn skills, technical skills, employability skills and career awareness necessary to be effective adult workers and citizens." In addition, a May 1998 memorandum from Jeanne B. Berdik, managing director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Connection, lists as an area of action: "Increase public awareness and demand for youth career development concepts by changing the focus of the public discussion from the process of education to the goal of producing economically self-sufficient adult citizens."

The STW accountability system, according to its critics, also advances business interests. Ohio Board of Education member Diana Fessler notes that STW tax money flows not through local school boards accountable to the people but to business-industry partnerships set up by governors. Under the system, writes *Richmond Times-Dispatch* columnist Robert Holland, each state is carved into labor market regions and business-led workforce development boards are supposed to tell schools what jobs they should prepare children to fill. Speaking for the skeptics, Holland counters that it is questionable that "economic soothsayers [will] know what jobs will exist 10 years from now."[33]

One lesson of STW is that the federal government has tremendous power to shape state and local education priorities.

But are the present arrangements really in the best interests of business? J.E. Stone, moderator of the National Education Consumers Clearinghouse and a professor at East Tennesse State University, believes businesses that support STW are making a good faith effort to collaborate with the schools but are being "hoodwinked" by educators and not getting what they really want.[34]

Kansas State Senator Laurie Bleeker wondered to what extent CEOs really want the pervasive vocationalization that the federal government is pressing on the states via STW.[35] She persuaded the Association of American Educators' Foundation to sponsor a nationwide survey of business leaders by the Luntz Research Company. Asked what should be the primary role of K-12 schooling, 65 percent of business respondents said, "Provide a broad, academic education." Only 30 percent said, "Train with specific skills for future work."[36]

The Heritage Foundation's Mark Wilson agrees with this assessment and says "employers report many youth don't have the basic reading, writing or analytic skills for entry-level jobs, even though more than four out of five teenagers complete high school today compared with just one in two after World War II." Wilson asserts that the $2.3 billion spent on STW

will have negligible effect on the basic skills that employers require because it "will be spent on rearranging the bureaucracy, marketing, and treating the symptom."[37]

4. Tells states how to run their own shows

The website of the National School-to-Work Learning & Information Center in Washington, D.C., says the STW law "doesn't create a new program" but allows states and their partners in business, labor, government, education and community organizations to develop school-to-work "systems" to prepare youth for the high wage, high skill careers of today's and tomorrow's global economy. The bill says it is the intent of the federal government to administer the Act in a "flexible" manner that gives states and localities wide discretion in establishing and implementing their plans. However, in many cases, the state-level reality tells a different story. For example, the experience of Virginia casts doubts on just how much flexibility the federal Education Department is really willing to grant. Funding for Virginia's proposal was held up because its plan called for work experiences to take place after regular school hours, not as part of the regular school day.

In Kansas, although the Board of Education is responsible for making education policy under the state constitution and voted in September 1998 to reject all federal STW funds, thirty-three executive orders at the federal and state level were used to put the program in place through a back door. In this case, the legislature and state and local school boards were excluded from the state's STW plan, which was developed with $16.8 million in federal seed money, approved by the National STW Office and not even submitted to the state board for approval, reports columnist Holland.[38]

This experience is widespread. Education activist Mary Keeley of Ormond Beach explains in an Internet post that "in Florida, our elected representatives did not vote to implement School-to-Work. The governor signed a contract with the federal government in exchange for money. Florida was then divided into 28 economic regions to be controlled by appointed, not elected, Workforce Development Boards." Ms Keeley believes that "it is important to understand that the federal government is prohibited by the Constitution, Article X, from dictating curriculum, but in exchange for funding, the school districts 'volunteer' to take on the federally mandated curriculum, STW."

What Future for STW?

The School-to-Work program was a response to a sense of alarm that the United States was losing its economic edge. This fear inspired the federal government to pledge to better prepare youth for the high wage, high skill jobs that will determine our economic might (and their own standard of living). While few would fault an effort to raise the achievement of those high-school students headed directly to the workplace, School-to-Work became something quite different—a job training program for all students, in some cases beginning with children barely out of diapers. How STW veered off course suggests some important lessons for federal education policy.

One lesson of STW is that the federal government has tremendous power to shape state and local education priorities. Once Washington identified not just raising the achievement of high school students who aren't headed to college, but also bridging school and work as important goals for the public schools, most states and school districts quickly embraced this goal as their own. States dutifully applied for these new federal funds and schools began to put kids to work on sandwich assembly lines. But should the federal government have made career awareness and job training a priority? Not everyone thinks so. Liberals, conservatives, and ordinary parents have all objected to moves that let career training supplant the school's main goal of providing students with basic academic skills and fundamental knowledge. Academic skills also go a long way toward turning youngsters into productive workers, and while there are certainly other habits and skills that students need for work, it is asking too much of schools to expect them to provide all of these to students in the limited number of hours that students spend in class. Too much, in any case, if academics are not perforce to suffer.

We can see from the STW experience how easy it is for federal programs—that identify urgent needs and then target funds at them—to distract schools from their fundamental mission.

This points to the second lesson to be learned from the STW experience: that Washington is better at identifying problems than at coming up with solutions. While the federal government accurately spotted a problem (or, more precisely, gave national attention to a problem that others had spotted), namely that many high-school graduates are ill-prepared for the workplace, it's far from clear that providing job readiness and career awareness through schools is the solution. Indeed, there seems to be rare agreement on left and right that the best way to prepare students for tomorrow's workplace—at least the best way within the purview of K-12 schooling—is to give everyone a solid instruction in core academic areas. As the Luntz survey showed, even business is coming around to this view, choosing "provide a broad, academic education" as the primary role of primary and secondary schools over "train with specific skills for future work" by a two to one margin.

The third lesson of STW is that federal programs are often used to subsidize faddish ideas about learning. The expansion of STW from a program designed to prepare non-college students for high wage jobs to a program of vocational education for all was a clear mistake. What drove this change? In part it was an opposition to tracking (and a desire to avoid stigmatizing the vocational students who would participate in STW) which deterred schools from focusing on students who were not headed to college. It was also the dubious belief that what all students in this country need, including college-bound students, is more hands-on learning.

To be sure, K-12 education should also do right by those young people who are not headed for college, but dumbing down the curriculum and forcing everyone to participate is not the solution. Schools should be equipping all students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in whatever career they choose. With workforce requirements in constant flux and the reality of the twenty-first century workplace signaling that people will typically change careers several times in their life times, a core academic curriculum is today more than ever the key to suc-

cessful participation in American society. That's a lesson that Uncle Sam seems not to have learned.

---

[1] If $2.3 billion doesn't seem like enough to make national waves, consider that state matching grants get applied to the program and that the legislation allows STW efforts to be integrated with funds available for other vocational education, job training, and standards-raising programs.

[2] Because it is forward funded, the last federal checks will be distributed in 2001.

[3] Mary Ann Zehr, "School to Work Movement Faces Test, Study Says," *Education Week*, 12 December 1998.

[4] Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* (Rochester NY: National Center on Education and the Economy, 1990). The commission and its affiliates study the current and future skills and needs of the nation's non-college workforce. The National Center on Education and the Economy was and is headed by Marc S. Tucker, president. Its board at the time included New York Governor Mario M. Cuomo, Apple's John Sculley, former North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., Hillary R. Clinton, Ira C. Magaziner, who was chairman of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, and Ray Marshall. Tucker, Magaziner, and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich are considered the architects of STW. Incidentally, they were also involved in the Clinton administration's failed health plan.

[5] Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*. (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

[6] On-site visit. This highly selective public school for college-bound students is clearly no dumping ground. It has developed its own rigorous School-to-Career curriculum, applying contextual learning and embracing STW principles and philosophy, but with Fairfax County funding and no federal STW funds or strings.

[7] Michael Chapman, "School-to-Work Law Gets Feds Heavily Involved," *Investor's Business Daily*, 27 August1998.

[8] Telephone interview.

[9] School-to-Work World Wide Web Site (http://www.stw.ed.gov)

[10] States may not use more than 10 percent of their grants for administrative purposes.

[11] Telephone interview, U.S. Department of Education, School-to-Work Office, January 1999.

[12] Center for Occupational Research and Development, TechPrep/School-to-Work Index and Improvement Program brochure, 1996.

[13] On-site visit.

[14] Indiana County School-to-Work Newsletter, 5 no. 1 (September/October 1997).

[15] Indiana County School-to-Work Newsletter, 5 no. 5 (May/Summer 1998).

[16] On-site visit.

[17] On-site visit.

[18] Personal and telephone interviews with Congressional aides.

[19] Telephone interview with Congressional aide.

[20] Telephone interview.

[21] *Times Herald Record (Middletown, NY)*, 18 July 1997.

[22] On-site visit.

[23] Telephone interview.

[24] Anna Flanagan, "Inner City Curriculum 'Parched', Says Kozol," National Council of Teachers of English *Council Chronicle*, September 1998.

[25] Telephone interview and Heritage Foundation draft report on School-to-Work Program, 4 February 1998.

[26] William G. Durden, "The Academics of School-to-Work: Looking at the German Model," *Wisconsin Interest*, 5 no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1996).

[27] Durden, 5-6.

[28] Phyllis Schlafly, Scripps Howard News Service, 13 September 1998.

[29] J. D. Hoye, Scripps Howard News Service, 13 September 1998.

[30] National Alliance of Business, "Work America," 15 no. 5 (May, 1998).

[31] National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley's NCRVE Centerwork, Spring, 1996.

[32] Brandon Copple and Louise Lee, "Formative Years: Labor Squeeze Forces Corporate America Back to High School," *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 July 1998.

[33] Robert Holland, "In Middle America, Awakening to the STW End Run," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 September 1998.

[34] Telephone interview.

[35] Reported by Robert Holland after participating in a STW panel discussion in Kansas. Holland, "In Middle America."

[36] Holland, "In Middle America."

[37] Telephone interview and draft report on School-to-Work Program, 4 February 1998.

[38] Holland, "In Middle America."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Michigan: Setting Priorities Straight

Honorable John Engler

Federal categorical programs do worse than nothing. They divert states and distract schools from educating children. This "governmentalization" of public education means that those closest to children—principals and teachers—are unable to make common sense decisions. Simply to call this problem "red tape" trivializes it. Not every good idea needs to become a government program. Federal "one-size-fits- all" solutions undermine the creativity of states. The federal role should include an expanded NAEP and solid research capacity and should free the states to develop appropriate responses as they think best.

This year (1998-99), Michigan will receive $870 million federal K-12 education dollars. Of this amount, approximately $770 million will "flow through" to school districts. Of this amount, only $418 million will actually make it into classrooms. That's less than 48 cents on the federal dollar used for the direct benefit of children—and that doesn't even take into account the money that's siphoned off before it ever leaves Washington! The result is a shameful waste of resources that should be used for teaching children. That's the bad news. The worse news is that the remaining 48 cents is often spent on the wrong things.

. . . federal categorical education programs do worse than nothing. They divert and distract schools from their mission of educating children.

ESEA: A Costly and Harmful Diversion

Federal programs, including the sixty-odd programs set in motion by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act now up for reauthorization, both directly and indirectly set state and local education policy, whether or not that was the intention of the legislators who created them. They cause schools to set false priorities and waste time "going after grants," and they encourage faddish and short-lived "reforms" that die as soon as "funding streams" run dry. They create programs for which there is little need and which might not otherwise exist but for the availability of free money. In short, the federal categorical education programs do worse than nothing. They divert and distract schools from their mission of educating children.

Washington has created—and state and local bureaucracies have perpetuated—a governmental culture that runs deep through our schools, particularly those in our large urban districts. The multiple layers of laws, policies, regulations, and guidelines gum up the system while maintaining civil servants comfortably in their offices. This "governmentalization" of public education has created school environments where those closest to the children—principals and teachers—are unable to make commonsensical decisions based the needs of those children. To simply call this "red tape" trivializes the seriousness of the problem.

Every Michigan child—indeed, every American child—deserves a teacher who cares about his or her learning and is empowered to make decisions based on that child's well-being. In too many places, teachers and principals are demoralized because they lack the authority required to address the individual needs of children. They are not in control of their own budgets, their own policies, even their own scheduling. They are hamstrung by rules—whether federal, state, or local laws or provisions of local "master contracts"—that are not of their making nor of their consent. There are thousands of teachers in Michigan—and millions across these United States—who would love to see the enormous regulatory burdens we've placed on our public schools lifted. More importantly, our children would be better served by doing so.

I do not question the motives behind the creation of most of today's federal education programs. Many, I know, were created to address manifest deficiencies at a given point in time. However, I offer two axioms that I've found to be true throughout my years in public service: (1) few government programs ever die, even after they've outlived their usefulness, and (2) not every good idea needs to become a government program. Indeed, if an idea *must* become a government program it is oftentimes because people wouldn't take part in it unless it was paid for by someone else!

Doing it Differently

If federal lawmakers want to improve education throughout the states, the best thing they could do is to allow for policy to be set—and dollars spent—at a level closer to children. I strongly support Congress using block grants to the states to allow this to happen. Just as block grants have enabled states to install far-reaching and much needed welfare reforms—in Michigan the number of welfare cases is at its lowest level since February 1971—so am I confident that they will give us similar flexibility with regard to education.

Not all states will use their federal dollars in the same way, nor should they. That's why the states have been called "laboratories of democracy." Michigan, for example, is known throughout the country for our unique education finance system and for one of the nation's strongest charter-school laws. Proposition A—the ballot referendum that shifted the way Michigan pays for its schools by raising the sales tax by 2 percent while slashing property taxes—has created full and fair funding for all of Michigan's students. Yet Michigan's solution might not be appropriate for other states, particularly those that currently have high sales taxes.

In a friendly way, we governors compete with one another. We all watch carefully the policy initiatives advanced by our colleagues and how well they are working in their states, and we look for ways that they might work in our own. I'm keeping a close eye on how Massachusetts's new teacher-testing program is working. We're all watching the publicly funded voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee, as well as the many privately funded scholarship programs around the country. I am very interested in the work being done in the area of setting academic standards and look forward to the day that the states can come to a workable way of creating a common benchmark against which we can all judge the performance of our schools and students. This is how it should be in the domain of education, and federal one-size-fits-all solutions undermine this creative dynamic.

There is a place for the federal government's modest involvement in education.

Michigan, like many states, faces an urban education problem. While I am proud of the advances that education in my state has made on the whole, I have no higher goal than bringing that same progress to those children with the fewest advantages in our society. For kids growing up in rough neighborhoods, in poverty, or in chaotic homes, education is the ticket to a better life. To deny these children a topnotch education because adults can't get their act together is unconscionable. Families and children who face the greatest obstacles to success will have first claim on Michigan's ESEA block grant.

The Feds' Rightful Role

There is a place for the federal government's modest involvement in education. One thing that can only be done at the national level is the creation of a common benchmark against which states can judge—and be judged upon—the performance of their schools. To this end, I support funding the expansion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the strengthening of its independent board. The federal government might also usefully become involved in funding or conducting real education research (unlike the sort coming out of the education "labs" these days), and using the pressure and purse that only the U.S. Congress can muster to break up the education monopoly in this country. (A full-blown voucher program in Washington, D.C. sounds to me like a terrific idea, and one that wouldn't intrude on the states' role with regard to education.)

My message to Washington is straightforward. ESEA wastes billions of taxpayers' dollars each year. But money's not the point. ESEA creates monolithic, self-perpetuating bureaucracies at the federal, state, and local levels. But red tape is not the point. ESEA helps foster an enfeebled, lock-step, yes-sir, rule-bound, governmental culture in many of our public schools. It adds to an atmosphere where passions are dulled, where few take risks, and where paychecks get issued whether or not the work is done. The losers in this game—and there are no "do-overs"—are the children. That's the point. That's why this legislation needs to be changed.

Arizona: Back Off, Washington

Lisa Graham Keegan

Education is the number one concern of voters, but before we ask the federal government to do something about it, we should think carefully about what we expect. Washington's customary method for addressing an education problem is to create another federal program, with all its attendant paperwork and red tape. Federal programs have tied dollars to bureaucracies and institutions, not to students. Such programs thrive on student stagnation and failure, leading to perverse incentives that mitigate against sensible local policy and responsibility. What we need are critical decisions made by parents and teachers, not Washington.

Ask the so-called Average American Voter what major issues were on his or her mind when stepping into the voting booth this past Election Day, and chances are good that education was at or near the top of the list. Education, at least as a vague, shimmery concept, is an issue that clearly resonates with the American people. We feel good when we think we've just voted to send a politician to Washington, D.C. who will debate thoughtfully why Johnny can't read and Jenny can't take shop class. We want our elected officials as involved in education as they are in national defense, tax reform, international trade, and the budget deficit—right?

Sometimes, when we ask Washington for help, we run a very real risk of getting it.

Think again. Just how involved do we *really* want our federal officials to be? We want them to take the issue seriously, to be sure—all Americans should take the education of children seriously. But before we ask Washington to get involved with the education of our children, we need to think about exactly what we're asking for. Sometimes, when we ask Washington for help, we run a very real risk of getting it.

The federal government's role in many policy arenas—not just education—is traditionally reactionary. This happens when Congress or the White House operates in what we might call the 'Identify and Attack Mode': the federal government identifies a particular problem, then sets about trying to find a way to attack it and wipe it out. More often than not, the government's preferred method for alleviating a perceived problem is to create a federally funded program with federally authored strings and federally enforced regulations. This approach may work fine when it comes to matters that have clearly defined federal

responsibilities, such as highways or post offices. When it comes to education, which has always been largely a state and local matter with no clear federal role, such an approach tends not to work so well. But that doesn't mean that Washington hasn't been trying.

Because we as voters haven't necessarily known what kind of role we have wanted the federal government to play, we have allowed Uncle Sam to define his role for us. The Congress has chosen to define itself largely through the creation of one federal program after another, handing out federal dollars to schools and school districts willing to trade local autonomy for a federally defined game plan to reach a federally defined goal—so long as cash goes with it.

Thirty years later, we still let Washington drive state and local decision making through the lure of federal dollars tied to programs with hazily-defined goals and well-defined regulations. We do it this way because, well, that's just the way we've been told it has always worked, and so for three decades we have succumbed to the programmatic mentality dictated by Washington. Our students have now come to be regarded more as sources of revenue for particular programs targeted at particular populations than as individuals with individual needs: the more students I can classify as at-risk, for example, the more funding I can receive under Title I.

The problem with this approach is that the federal government has tied its dollar to a program rather than to a student. An at-risk student who succeeds will, more often than not, find him or herself ineligible for more at-risk services. When the student moves on, the federal dollar dries up—and it won't come back until that child again slips into the at-risk group and becomes eligible for the federal program once more. These kinds of programs thrive on student stagnation, even failure.

This, then, is the bill of goods that we have been sold by Washington, but it's a bill of goods that we invited when we didn't set the ground rules first. Even given the federal government's track record, voters still tend to look to their elected officials in Washington to fix the schools in their communities simply because they have been told for too long that it can't be done without Washington's help. But politicians shouldn't be the ones deciding what goes on in the classrooms of our communities; we should.

The government of a democratic, civilized society can and should be involved in ensuring an excellent education for its children. But as citizens in that democracy, it is up to us to help determine exactly what the nature of that involvement is and, more importantly, what it isn't.

During last year's federal budget debate, the Congress beat back a proposal by President Clinton that would have provided federal tax credits for construction and renovation of public schools. The problem is, school construction has always been the responsibility of state and local governments, not the federal government. The last time the federal government got into the business of school construction was during the Great Depression, and then only because the states were destitute. States are far from destitute today.

This is not to say that there aren't schools in dire need of assistance. However, a crumbling hulk of a school in the inner city—or, for that matter, a Buckingham Palace in the suburbs—isn't there because the federal government isn't spending federal dollars on schools. It's there because state and local governments haven't done the hard work necessary to create equity. A federally funded shot in the arm isn't what it takes to fix the school facilities in our communities; it's serious, committed work by our state-level administrators and legislators.

Bringing in the federal government to build a school also brings in federal regulations—such as those mandated under the Davis-Bacon Act—that many states and communities can do without and that may, in fact, increase the cost of building a school. Ultimately, injecting the federal government into school construction does everything to treat the symptoms and nothing to treat the cause. We need to ask state officials, not Washington, to do the work necessary to get school facilities in order.

While Congress succeeded in keeping school construction a state and local issue, it was not as successful in doing the same for the issue of class size. President Clinton made it abundantly clear that he had decided that smaller class sizes are a good thing, even though research has provided no clear indicators of the impact that class size has on a child's ability to learn. Nevertheless, because class size had been a good thing in some of the classrooms the President had visited, then smaller class sizes had to be a good thing for every classroom in America.

. . . our failure to define the federal government's appropriate role in education has allowed them to encroach into territory traditionally held by state and local policymakers.

The result? A new federal program spending $1.2 billion of our tax dollars to reduce class sizes. If that sounds like a good deal, think again. This program doesn't let each school or school district decide how it wants to reduce class size. Instead, it creates a new seven-year program, which will ultimately cost $12 billion, requiring school districts to hire new teachers. Not only that, but it also tells a state which grades it needs these teachers in first, and insists that every district's problem is actually rooted in the quantity of teachers in the state, even if neither of these is true. This is what state and local educators are up against every time the federal government takes an active interest in what should be a state and local decision.

In the first year of the President's new program, Arizona will receive more than $17 million. Seventeen million dollars is a lot of money; what do we get for that kind of investment? At $30,000 per year—a good but not great wage—we can pay for a little over 500 new teachers, as the program asks. In Arizona, that comes to a bit under two new teachers per school district. Not per *school*, but per *school district*. This is not the sort of classroom size reduction initiative we were hoping for when we asked the federal government to get involved with education.

Had the federal government instead provided us with our $17 million and then asked us to reduce class size in a way we deemed best—still an inappropriate intrusion into local decision making, but let's continue the thought experiment—Arizona could have done any number of things to meet the goal. With $17 million, we could have started 425 new charter schools

across our state—more than enough schools to keep class sizes relatively small. Or we could have invested in new teachers for schools that need them, and trained a lot of others who are already in the classroom. Under the President's program, we're not even allowed to do this, as the program actually limits the amount of money we can spend to train teachers who are already working with our students.

Taxpayers have been left holding the bag. We were told that we invested in an effort that would reduce class sizes and increase student test scores. What we actually paid for is more federal involvement in the way local administrators run schools. Once again, our failure to define the federal government's appropriate role in education—the line in the sand, which we state unequivocally, they cannot cross—has allowed them to encroach into territory traditionally held by state and local policymakers.

Every minute we spend making sure we're in compliance with pages of federal regulations means one less minute we can spend helping teachers with professional development, improving curriculum, developing our own testing standards, and ensuring that all students are getting all the help they need to succeed.

What's surprising is that this type of prescriptive program can still be enacted at a time when many policymakers are beginning to claim state and local autonomy—the "devolution" of federal programs to the state and local level—as their new religion. Yet, with each of the major education programs reauthorized by Congress during the past two years, we have seen the role of the U.S. Department of Education gradually expanded.

For example, the recent reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Act contains a curious provision that has state program administrators scratching their collective heads. The new act lays out four specific performance areas in which vocational education (voc ed) students will be expected to succeed, such as academic achievement and post-program employment. This in itself makes sense. However, the act also inserts an unprecedented requirement that states must negotiate with the U.S. Department of Education on how they will measure voc ed students' success in these four areas.

Arizona already has in place its own performance standards and measures, with high expectations for all voc ed students. For example, we presently have a standard regarding the continued employment or training of our school-to-work graduates, and we deem our program successful if 90 percent of our school-to-work graduates meet this goal. We developed these measures by ourselves, without "negotiating" with the federal government.

With the new act in place, we will have to more closely align Arizona's standards with those mandated under federal law. Further, we will now have to negotiate, with a federal bureaucrat 2,500 miles away from Phoenix, exactly what Arizona expects of its own students and how it will measure their success.

A successful federal role should not be defined by how much the federal government can spend on its programs. While budget standoffs in Washington have been won the past few years by those who show that they can outspend the other guy on education programs, the

facts reveal that sheer dollar levels alone do not determine student achievement. We need to get away from the dollar-equals-success mentality.

As a nation, we spend a lot of money on education. With federal, state, and local dollars combined, we spend approximately $340 billion a year on K–12 education alone. That's 4.5 percent of our GDP. Throw in the costs of higher education on top of that, and we spend 7.4 percent of our GDP on education. That puts us close to the top in spending on education in the world, yet we continue to graduate students who can't read, who finish near the bottom of all industrialized nations in math and science, and who need their SAT scores artificially inflated because they aren't up to par. What are we getting for all that spending?

We have been so programmed by various special interest groups into thinking that increased federal spending means stronger student achievement that we scarcely stop to think about the mechanisms the federal government is using to deliver these dollars to our communities. I've provided just a few examples of federal programs that sound like a good thing on which to spend tax dollars, but which, on closer examination, are actually cramping the styles of state and local administrators.

These new programs come with reams of new federal reporting requirements and mandates that require more and more of the time of our teachers, principals, and superintendents. In my department, I have approximately 165 employees responsible for working with and managing federal programs. That's roughly 45 percent of my staff working to oversee about 6 percent of Arizona's total spending on education—and we consider our staff to be relatively small. And every minute we spend making sure we're in compliance with all those pages of federal regulations means one less minute we can spend helping teachers with professional development, improving curriculum, developing our own testing standards, and ensuring that all students are getting all the help they need to succeed.

So, how can the federal government help?

First, the Congress and the administration should take the opportunity during the upcoming ESEA reauthorization to more fully explore their role as a clearinghouse for research and data, rather than as the administrator of burdensome compliance norms. We presently spend only 1/3 of 1 percent of federal education dollars on education research and development. Fast food chains spend more money determining whether eight- to seventeen-year-olds are learning to like their new sandwich than we spend determining whether those same kids are learning anything at all. Steven Goldman of the Ball Foundation put our priorities in perspective when he informed the U.S. Senate Budget Committee's Task Force on Education that the operating budget of one of the ten education laboratories is smaller than what his seed company expends in a facility devoted solely to breeding petunias.

The U.S. Department of Education provides a trove of data on student performance, both nationwide and internationally. These data go largely ignored. And they go ignored because we would rather resort to anecdotes promoting feel-good programs that don't work than deal with the painful truth that our students are not achieving as we expect.

My next bit of advice to the federal government can be summed up in two words: back off. Congress and the administration need to invest in state and local autonomy, not new federal programs. While I certainly appreciate thirty years of good intentions on Congress's part, I believe that no one knows better what is needed in the classroom than a teacher, and that no one knows better the needs of an individual child than that child's parents. Federal resources should be funneled directly to those students with the greatest need, not to a federal program that simply needs students.

In Arizona, we work to empower our parents to make the best choices for their children simply by providing them with choices in the first place. We do this by injecting the dynamic element of charter schools into our school system. We presently have more than 270 charter schools in our state, serving over 30,000 students and their families. Charter schools, through their sheer variety, give parents and students a choice of the kind of education they want to receive, and they provide the kind of accountability we all demand. This is not only because of the choice inherent in the system, but also because we attach the funding to the child to take to the charter school of his or her choice. A school that does not perform will find itself without community support, without students, and without students' money.

What's more, Arizona did this on its own, without the help of the federal government. Left to our own devices, we were able to develop and pass a state charter school law, and we are now watching some wonderful things happen. This success did not go unnoticed. With an eye on Arizona's charter school system, the U.S. Congress last year approved a brand new Charter Schools Act, with a brand new set of rules and regulations that schools will have to follow to be eligible for a brand new pot of money. States don't need it, administrators don't want it, and in Arizona we won't be applying for any of this funding from a program based on our own model.

It is time to stop insisting that our representatives in Washington figure out what to do about education. We'll figure it out for them.

As I mentioned at the outset, there is good reason that education is a priority with today's voters, and it is encouraging that they are taking an active interest in how our students are doing. Wonderful things can happen when state and local governments work in cooperation with the federal government, but the time has come for us to define exactly what the extent of that federal involvement will be. Federal involvement is one thing; federal encroachment quite another. If we do not draw the line on what is and is not acceptable federal intervention, the federal government will continue to do it for us and to us.

We need to tell our representatives what we think Washington should—and shouldn't—do. We should tell them that we want the federal government to gather the best information available about programs and practices and place that information in the hands of state education agencies. We should tell them that we want our tax dollars going to students, not federal programs, and that we want critical decisions being made by parents and teachers, not by Washington.

It is time to stop insisting that our representatives in Washington figure out what to do about education. We'll figure it out for them.

Pennsylvania: Vesting Power in the People

Eugene W. Hickok

Washington has managed to wedge itself into education policy at every level, despite the fact that the U.S. Constitution makes no mention of education. For some time now, the President has sounded like a combination governor and school superintendent. Yet he does not employ teachers or run schools. Federal funding should be provided with fewer strings. Whom do we trust to get education right? States and communities should have greater autonomy, but real decisions must be vested with parents, employers, and taxpayers.

The election of November 1998 is behind us now. The 106th Congress has been convened under new leadership, and the Clinton administration will do its best to ride out the rest of its tenure under crisis-management conditions. And while a plethora of thorny issues may confound the Congress, education has captured the attention of both political parties and just about everyone in Washington.

Federal funds flowing into the Commonwealth exceed $1 billion in 1998-99, with almost all of that money going to underwrite more than 65 separate federal programs.

There is something ironic about education being such a big agenda issue in the Federal City. It speaks volumes about how far we have strayed from this nation's political roots. Until the 1960s, education was considered a state responsibility. There was no federal Department of Education, for example, with its accompanying reams of rules and regulations driving education policy. Then came the Great Society and a radical change in the balance of responsibility—and power—over education. While today education remains preeminently a state function—in Pennsylvania, public education accounts for 44 percent of state appropriations—the federal influence is not modest. In every state, federal funds and regulations not only shape education policy; they also, too often, define it.

While the numbers and issues vary by state, it is not an overstatement to argue that the federal government has managed over the years to wedge itself into education policy at every level. Pennsylvania, for example, has 501 school districts, with approximately 1.8 million students attending more than 3,000 public schools. Pennsylvania taxpayers spend about $14 billion dollars on K-12 public education—that's more than $1,160 from every man, woman, and child in our Commonwealth.

Federal funds flowing into the Commonwealth exceed $1 billion in 1998-99, with almost all of that money going to underwrite more than 65 separate federal programs, ranging from Title I to professional development for teachers, and from educational equity to charter schools, among others. Federal funds also underwrite about one-third of the positions within the Pennsylvania Department of Education, plus many more in school districts across the state. Some, perhaps many, of these programs and positions are praiseworthy, at least in concept. But virtually none of them reflect the priorities of Pennsylvania parents and taxpayers. Currently, states and local schools go where the money takes them. For example, if there is money available for more teachers, most districts will feel compelled to take the money for those purposes, regardless of whether or not hiring more teachers is a priority for them. It makes far more sense for states and school districts to determine where any money should go, based on their priorities.

Local control of education in its fullest and purest sense means control is in the hands of the people—the parents who send their children to school, the taxpayers who pay for those schools.

Moreover, the rhetoric of Washington sometimes does more to shape state education policy than do actual federal funds and regulations. For some time now, the President has sounded remarkably like a combination governor and school superintendent. One day it's class size and additional teachers. The next day it's school construction and computers in the classroom, followed by higher standards for students and teachers. Praiseworthy rhetoric, for sure. But presidents don't run schools. They don't hire teachers, set standards, build buildings, or instruct students. On the other hand, governors do have direct responsibility for public education in their states. And while they do not teach students or run schools themselves, they do, along with state legislatures, allocate taxpayer funds for that purpose; and they write the basic ground rules.

A proper and more constitutionally correct approach to education policy in the United States starts with the proposition that the states matter. Surely Washington does, too; but it is in the states that public-school policy is shaped and implemented and public funds are raised and spent. Indeed, most, if not all, state constitutions place the responsibility for maintaining a system of public schools with the state itself. Local school boards, in essence, are the states' agents in fulfilling this mandate. To say this is constitutionally correct is almost self-evident.

The U.S. Constitution does not mention education at all. More than two hundred years of constitutional interpretation have not changed the essential state role in public education, although some refinements regarding rights, access, and obligations have evolved. Education is rightly considered one of those areas of public policy reserved to the states under the Tenth Amendment. The constitutional principle of federalism—long out of fashion in Washington—dictates that the states retain ultimate authority over public education.

Not only is this a constitutionally correct allocation of authority over public education, it makes good sense. Public education exists to promote the public interest. In a democracy, educated citizens are needed to make educated decisions. Public education, therefore, must never lose touch with the public it exists to serve and support. That is one rationale for locally elected school boards; one rationale for local control over such issues as curriculum,

facilities and staffing; and one reason locally-elected school boards have authority to raise public revenues to run their public schools.

It makes good sense to keep control over education close to the public as well, since such control tends to promote diversity and innovation in public education. At the very least, it blunts the tendency toward a "one size fits all" approach to public education. Different communities seek different things from schools, and that is good for education. The greater the distance between those who rely upon schools for the education of their children and the preparation of their employees, the greater the potential disconnect between public education and its clients that inevitably leads to systemic breakdowns. It is not pure coincidence that this nation has experienced an overall decline in the quality of public education as Washington has sought to increase its authority over public education.

Having said all of this, it is time to reconsider just what local control over public education means.

Tradition has it that local school boards run local public schools, with states establishing statewide education priorities. School board members raise the revenues, allocate those revenues, hire administrators and teachers, and negotiate their contracts. Through their state, regional, and national associations, school boards and teachers seek to influence state and national policies and budgets, which have direct consequences for local schools. All of this creates a broad, loosely defined system of public education that differs by degree from state to state. Most school board members tend to take their responsibilities seriously and are very protective of their schools and strong advocates for them. They want fewer state and national mandates, greater state and national resources, and more control over their schools. The problem is, however, that the schools aren't theirs.

It is time to reinvigorate the notion that public schools belong to the people. Local control of education in its fullest and purest sense means control is in the hands of the people—the parents who send their children to school, the taxpayers who pay for those schools. Tradition has it that the people select school boards to act for them, and ours is a rich tradition. But when that tradition gets in the way of improving the quality of education provided the people, or stifles innovation and opportunity in education for the people, changes need to be made. More importantly, perhaps, when that tradition loses touch with its original purpose—when school boards feel their job is to maintain and protect a system rather than to provide the best education possible for their constituents - it is time to break with tradition.

In the coming months, Congress will consider the reauthorization of a milestone in federal education policy: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Created in 1965, ESEA accounts for $12 billion worth of programs annually. Revisited several times since its creation, ESEA has enjoyed broad and bipartisan support. After all, who opposes national support for public education? Surely the time has come, however, to rephrase that question.

The issue is not whether the federal government should support public education. Properly understood, the question is what shape and form should federal support for public education take? The answer to that question should be informed by those principles that, at their root,

made this nation the envy of the world and enabled us to create an education system that was once the envy of the world.

Three principles should guide the reauthorization of ESEA: federalism, results and citizenship. Congress should respect federalism and return to the states their authority to determine how best to spend their residents' tax dollars. The power to decide how taxpayers' monies are spent should be returned to the taxpayers, thus ensuring true "local control." What matters is not how much money goes to support public education, but whether each dollar spent on education produces results. Finally, how does education—in whatever form it takes—improve the character of citizenship in our Republic? For in the end, public education in a democracy is really all about the formation of citizens.

National education priorities—along with those developed at the state and local levels—need to focus on substance rather than symbolism, results rather than process.

As the 106th Congress takes up reauthorization of ESEA, it should seek to ensure that states have ultimate authority over the use of federal funds. There is broad discussion about sending federal dollars directly to the classrooms, avoiding state capitols completely. The argument behind this makes some sense, at least on the surface.

Money going to states more often than not helps to maintain state bureaucracies rather than improving education. Replacing a federal bureaucrat with a state bureaucrat does little to improve education. But the alternative—bypassing the states and sending money directly to school districts—would do more in the long run to nationalize education policy than anything Washington has done heretofore. Whatever Congress might come up with as education policy would immediately become the agenda in every public school in America, a prospect that is not appealing. However, there is a sensible middle ground.

Federal monies should be sent to the states, with few (if any) strings attached. State bureaucracies should not be able to skim very much for "administrative" purposes. Cap administrative costs, and then send the rest to school districts. That way, the states retain their proper place as critical actors in education policy, and more money gets to the classroom, as it should.

Simply consolidating federal funds into one "pot" and forwarding those funds to school districts will do little to address state and local education priorities. It would be far more pragmatic for states to use their citizens' federal tax dollars to support state and local initiatives without the burden of continued federal control and oversight on how the funds are spent.

There are obvious reasons to limit federal regulatory intrusion into state and local education policymaking. Foremost among them is the simple fact that it is not the federal government's money. Indeed, there is no such thing as "government" money; it is taxpayers' money. Whenever possible, it should be returned to them to do with as they decide. That doesn't mean the federal government cannot recognize national priorities in education. It is merely to acknowledge the fact that national priorities need not inevitably lead to federal policies.

For example, a national priority to improve elementary school reading scores might produce innumerable local strategies to accomplish that. However, prudence suggests that federal funds should go to the states and their school districts so that they might decide how best to employ those funds in pursuit of national, state, and local education priorities, such as improving elementary school reading scores.

National education priorities—along with those developed at the state and local levels—need to focus on substance rather than symbolism, results rather than process. There is a need to establish solid benchmarks for education performance and to hold schools to those benchmarks. In order to achieve an "educational bottom line," the emphasis on education policy has to shift away from a preference for satisfying "stakeholders" toward models of performance, results, and accountability. And these models should vary considerably among and within the states as schools respond to the concerns of their constituents with fewer constraints coming from Washington.

Fewer strings mean greater local control. States are better situated to dictate education policy than Washington, and local school districts are even better situated than states. But given the inherent tendency of local school boards and administrations to maintain the status quo, and given the problems inherent in doing so, greater weight should be given to parents. Parents, after all, have the most at stake in education. Moreover, it is parents who foot the bill for education.

It is simply a matter of justice that parents have greater say in shaping the education their children receive. Federal education policy should reflect that. If states and local school districts choose to use federal funds to empower parents by underwriting charter-school and school-choice programs aimed at improving education and widening educational opportunities for children, so be it. It is the logical extension of local control. Indeed, it is the truest form of local control.

This last point cannot be emphasized too much. Parental involvement in education is critical to success. This is a matter of faith among professional educators. The best schools have parents involved. And even in the worst of schools, some students succeed, usually in partnership with parents or other family members. The more authority over education is returned to families, the more families will become engaged in education. Today, even in the toniest suburban school districts, far too many parents think education is solely the responsibility of the schools. When families fail to recognize a personal responsibility for the education of their children, instead leaving it to the professionals, the unique and crucial role of education in a democracy is undermined.

Public education in a democracy must always have as its animating principle the idea that public schools are the people's schools. Public education in a democracy is not supposed to be decided and administered only by professionals. Public education in a democracy is not supposed to be defined by 180 days of instruction and public facilities. It is the people's business. And when the people no longer recognize this, education suffers and so does democracy. By returning authority to the clients of education—parents, employers, taxpayers,

etc.—it is possible to reinvigorate the relationship of the people to education in such a way that education improves, citizenship is nourished, and the democracy is embellished. Surely, these are purposes that all of us might applaud.

We can achieve these ambitious goals by rethinking the federal government's role in public education. Our goals can be reached not by earmarking more federal funds or adding more layers of cumbersome federal rules and regulations to an already bloated, inefficient bureaucracy. Rather, we can improve education for America's children by entrusting states and citizens with more control over their hard earned tax dollars and, ultimately, more control over their local schools.

Colorado: Trust but Verify

William J. Moloney and Richard G. Elmer

Over time, federal, state, and local education officials have come to focus on compliance with regulations rather than providing services that help children. A combination of entrenched bureaucracy and its predilection for the status quo means that needed reforms have been ignored. Every policy decision should be based on the best interests of the child. Freedom to make decisions locally in exchange for accountability for results should guide ESEA reforms. What is needed today is a commitment to trust local educators, yet verify the accomplishment of children.

The educational fate of every state is locked in place to some degree by the actions of officials in Washington. By our observation, most federal education officials are no better, nor are they any worse, than most of the rest of us. Such powerful federal influence in American education, however, seems grandly misplaced if we understand the intent of the nation's founders. They knew full well what royalty could do with the learning potential (and, therefore, the real fate) of a nation's children. It was no accident that those leaders intended to avoid federal involvement in public education. To begin with, then, what is essentially wrong with federal involvement in education policy is its growing power to interfere with the obligations and defined responsibilities of the states.

Know the child. Respond to the child. Document the progress of the child. The rest will care for itself.

While disavowing "top down management," Washington's practice has been to indulge in just that. Why, for example, mandate the hiring (however mythical it may be) of 100,000 new teachers? In many circumstances, more teachers are not the answer to the local need. We suggest that the profligacy of federal pursuits has thrown numerous distractions into the minds of locally responsible educators.

As educators, our thoughts and actions have been both distracted and diverted in some measure by federal initiatives that have been founded in nothing more than good intent devoid of sharp focus. Inappropriate involvement by federal officials has served to confuse nearly everyone. Federal, state, and local district officials (here read "federal projects" officials) have widely developed an historic "compliance with regulation" approach (monitoring) as opposed to a service provision approach designed to collaborate in getting the job done for children.

Many years of federal regulations and their attendant behaviors have fostered equivalent layers of imitative and often petty bureaucratic expectations and behaviors: "These are the require-

ments"; "We never did it that way before"; "It may sound like a good idea, but the feds would never allow it." And on, and on.

We have had to account for the funds, but we have not necessarily had to account for measurable instructional productivity. Our message is in part: Don't cast your eyes on Washington alone if you would search out the "blocking agents" to educational reform. Rigid thinking, duly armed with "THE REGULATIONS," is manifest in many local and state offices as well. It is learned behavior, developed over many years of federal intrusion into state instructional obligations and requirements. The threat (more often implied than explicit) that "you won't get your funding, unless . . ." has hung heavy over the local educator's head for many a long year. With that threat, why be creative when you can be safe?

If a person really understands sound instructional practice, he or she knows that it all begins with respect for the current developed reality embodied in the child at hand. Beginning with the potential of that child, and from that, the aggregate potential of all the children in a classroom, or a school, or a district, or a state, or a nation, the obligation runs back to the beginning: Know the child. Respond to the child. Document the progress of the child. The rest will care for itself. Thus, we speak to accountability for the expenditure of funds.

If local districts truly account for *all* children and develop a body of defensible evidence of student accomplishment, then why cannot such accomplishment be successfully traced back to the expenditure made? This is a way of saying, "Account for the student accomplishment, then it must follow that the money was either well spent or badly spent." No "category of funding" would be left out, because each child would be accounted for.

Monitoring is predicated on a lack of trust. We must trust local educators, yet verify the accomplishment of children.

If, in pursuit of better public education, we have dollars extracted from the common citizen, funneled through layers of federal bureaucrats, back down through other layers of bureaucrats, finally delivering a weakened monetary punch on behalf of children, why not at least consider the obvious: Delete the layers of bureaucracy.

Count on the locals. Trust, but verify. Why not well-designed block grants with well-defined requirements? Cut down the paperwork attendant on separate bureaucracies. Cut down fewer trees. Save the planet. Maybe even save a child now and then.

In Colorado, federal K–12 monies flowed in the aggregate amount of $173 million in 1997–98. Programs provided by these monies number 36. Each of these "funding streams" represents its own sub-set bureaucracy. Each bureaucracy makes its own administrative and management demands. Staff in the Colorado Department of Education directly involved with these programs number 125. Local officials (district and school level personnel who are funded by, and who "pursue" federal program expectations and requirements) total 6,262 statewide. Nearly all these people are competent professionals who could provide far more effective service as respondents to well-defined local needs than they can as "compliance police."

Houston: Washington . . . We Have a Problem

Susan Sclafani and Don McAdams

Federal education programs could be more helpful to local reform efforts if Congress would lift the regulatory burden. The law continues to mandate that all districts spend an inordinate amount of time documenting their compliance with complicated and unnecessary rules. It would be much more effective for the federal government to allocate dollars to local school districts and hold them responsible for their results.

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) received approximately $72 million in categorical and competitive federal education grants in 1998-99. This paper discusses HISD's experience with two major ESEA programs, Title I and Title VI, and considers how they could be improved from the perspective of a major urban public-school system.

. . . federal education programs could be far more helpful to local education reforms if Congress would lift the burden of paperwork and regulation.

The two programs offer a striking contrast: Title I funds have a single purpose—boosting the academic performance of disadvantaged children—and Congress has burdened them with elaborate rules and detailed accounting requirements meant to ensure that the funds are used for their designated purpose. Title VI is essentially a block grant that can be used to pursue a range of innovative reform strategies. Both programs have contributed to the remarkable gains in achievement that have recently been posted by Houston students, but federal education programs could be far more helpful to local education reforms if Congress would lift the burden of paperwork and regulation.

As with most cities, Houston gets the lion's share of its federal aid—nearly $55 million a year—from Title I. These funds have contributed to significant academic progress, as measured by the state-mandated Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Probably the most striking change is the enormous increase in the number of Title I schools ranked as exemplary by the Texas Academic Accountability System: from no schools in 1995 to thirty-six schools in 1998.

Overall TAAS results for students in Title I schools are now stronger than for HISD as a whole. In 1998, 84.5 percent of Title I students passed the TAAS test in reading (compared to 81.0 percent of students district-wide); in mathematics, 80.9 percent of Title I students

passed (compared to 78.0 percent of students district-wide); and in writing, 86.5 percent of Title I students passed (compared to 82.1 percent of students district-wide).

In the 1994 reauthorization of Title I, changes were made that gave schools and districts greater programmatic and financial flexibility. These changes have enabled the district to use more of the funds as it sees fit and have contributed to the achievements cited above. But while the federal government has allowed local education agencies greater latitude in developing their own programs, the law continues to mandate that all districts spend an inordinate amount of time documenting their compliance with complicated and unnecessary rules.

For example, one HISD employee currently spends a minimum of three days per month documenting that federal funds have been used to supplement district funds, rather than to supplant them. To demonstrate maintenance of effort—that the district is not spending one less dollar of local funds on Title I schools than on non-Title I schools—the accounting department staff must compute every expenditure for staff, materials, equipment, and contracted services for each school. This is extremely difficult to do on a monthly basis, especially for staffing expenditures, since stipends that are paid annually or semi-annually must be forecast. Since actual salaries of individual teachers are used, the whole equation is thrown off whenever a teacher leaves one school and is replaced by a teacher with either more or less experience (and higher or lower pay). In a large urban district, this happens frequently, forcing the accounting department constantly to recalculate the year-to-date figures and intervene to recreate the desired balance. The rules require that this be done monthly so that, if a discrepancy is discovered, it can be remedied for the rest of the year. If this discrepancy is not eliminated, the district will not have complied with the maintenance of effort provision.

It would be far more effective for the federal government simply to allocate Title I dollars according to the number of eligible students and hold the districts responsible for results.

Clearly, this procedure has nothing to do with the district's commitment to equity nor does it ensure increased student achievement. It would be far more effective for the federal government simply to allocate Title I dollars according to the number of eligible students and hold the districts responsible for results. If a particular district cannot demonstrate improved achievement, the state would be required to audit the programs serving the eligible students and place the district under a technical assistance regimen until results improve. This would enable districts to apply all the funds to programs and not to staff completing forms to demonstrate fiscal and regulatory compliance. Under this changed system, fewer dollars could be allocated to state departments of education and central district offices, and more would go directly to student services.

The Title VI program is for the most part free of the accounting requirements that plague Title I. Title VI operates as a small block grant to each state to support innovative reform efforts consistent with the eight National Education Goals and the GOALS 2000: Educate America Act.

Houston has chosen to spend a significant percentage of the approximately $1.7 million it receives in Title VI funds on programs to boost the level of teaching in the district, including training teachers to use E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge Series and the Junior Great Books "shared inquiry" method, dispatching professional development consultants to low-performing schools to help teachers hone their skills, and offering year-round professional development to ensure that teachers can relate the curriculum to standardized tests.

The range of district-approved programs and projects funded with the help of Title VI extends far beyond teacher training. The program's flexibility allows school districts to innovate; the majority of the programs funded through Title VI in Houston are unique to our school district. Funds have been used, for example, to support the Gang Education Awareness and Resistance program (GEAR), which uses curricula and mentors to implement a ten-point school plan for gang prevention and intervention; to create a multicultural magnet program for first graders called People Place located on an HISD campus; to pay the salary of a special liaison to non-English-speaking parents; and for long-term, after-school study groups in different areas within HISD.

Houston has made a concerted effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of its Title VI programs.[1] Several begin with an initial pre-test to determine needs and offer continuing assessments to document progress. Research evaluations as well as test scores, grades, and informal assessments have shown that many of the Title VI programs have made a difference.

The Rice University School Math Project, for example, a program that provides intensive summer workshops for teachers on math content and instructional strategies, has been a great success, with students in the classrooms of teachers trained by the program outperforming students in classes with teachers who had not attended this training.

The Algebra Initiative, a professional development series for all teachers of algebra that lasts an entire school year, is another good example of a program that has worked well for HISD. In this program, teachers met weekly with a facilitator to discuss the algebra curriculum to be taught that week and to debrief their successes and failures in the previous week. In schools that were diligent in participating in this initiative, student scores on the state-mandated end-of-course examination improved dramatically.

Turning The Tables is a project that focuses on the development of higher order thinking skills for disadvantaged secondary students. It is designed to improve test-taking skills on standardized tests, such as the SAT and ACT. Students in classes using the Turning the Tables Program significantly outperformed the control group on SAT-like assessments.

Houston's experience with Title VI shows that a forward-looking school district can succeed in raising student achievement without all of the compliance requirements of Title I. It is clear that the time and other resources spent complying with Title I requirements could be better spent. In districts where student achievement is lagging, the manpower currently dedicated to managing compliance should be converted to assist those districts in more effective planning and implementation. All districts could dedicate the three days per month spent on comparability and maintenance of effort documentation to providing more effective services to their

schools and students. The forthcoming reauthorization of ESEA gives the Congress a wonderful opportunity to turn these lessons into legislation.

1 Copies of research reports are available from the Research and Accountability Department of the Houston Independent School District at http://www.houston.isd.tenet.edu/research/. From the website, one can access much of the data on student achievement presented in this paper, and can request research reports.

Student Performance: The National Agenda in Education

Diane Ravitch

The thirty year old federal education programs were mostly designed to remove legal barriers and provide equality of access. Now, federal policy should attach the highest priority to strategies that boost student performance. Funding formulas should be changed so that federal aid follows the child. "Out-of-the-box" reforms should be embraced, such as vouchers, charter schools, state (and national) testing, and teacher testing as remedies for our ailing schools. Federally funded demonstration programs could be used to resolve debates that have been deadlocked by politics and ideology. The overriding strategy must be to redesign policies and programs so that funds and incentives serve to educate children, not preserve the system.

If measured by the goals of removing legal barriers and providing equality of access, federal policy has been successful. Now federal education policies must attach the highest priority to strategies that boost student performance for all groups.

For more than thirty years, the primary goal of U.S. federal education policy has been to ensure equality of educational opportunity. The creation of programs like Title I, Head Start, and bilingual education in the 1960s and special education for handicapped children in the 1970s directed federal resources to children who had been poorly served by the nation's state- and locally-based education system.

If measured by the goals of removing legal barriers and providing equality of access, federal policy has been successful. Now federal education policies must attach the highest priority to strategies that boost student performance for all groups.

The State of Student Performance

It comes as news to no one that U.S. student performance is lagging. The federally funded National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation's only measure of academic achievement that tests representative national samples, has been tracking performance over the past few decades. From 1969 to 1996, according to NAEP, nine-year-olds made significant gains in science, but thirteen-year-olds showed no change, and seventeen-year-olds lost ground. In mathematics,

from 1973 to 1996, students at ages nine and thirteen showed improvement, but the performance of seventeen-year-olds was unchanged. In reading, from 1971 to 1996, scores improved for children aged nine and thirteen, but not for the older group. In writing, tested from 1984 to 1996, performance was flat for the two younger groups and declined for the seventeen-year-olds.

In addition to long-term data, NAEP reports student performance in relation to standards, or achievement levels (identified as "basic," "proficient," and "advanced"), that describe what students in grades 4, 8, and 12 *should* know. The most recent NAEP report shows far too many American students falling below even "basic" academic achievement. In reading, for example 40 percent of fourth-grade students score below basic; in mathematics, 38 percent of eighth graders are below basic; in science, 43 percent of twelfth graders are below basic. Shockingly, the scores of black and Hispanic students at age seventeen are equivalent to those of thirteen-year-old white students in every academic subject.

The NAEP surveys are a reminder of one critical federal role in education—providing accurate statistics and assessments. But how, in an educational system rooted in state and local authority, can the federal government move beyond *assessing* student performance to *improving* it?

The State of Teacher Quality

Any effort to improve student achievement must begin with an appraisal of teacher qualifications. Students are unlikely to be high achievers unless their teachers are knowledgeable in the subject they are teaching. Yet many teachers, particularly in mathematics and science, are teaching "out-of-field"—that is, without either a major or a minor in their main teaching assignment. In 1994, 36 percent of the nation's public school teachers (42.8 percent of private school teachers) were teaching out-of-field. In schools where more than 40 percent of the students are low income, nearly half the teachers are out-of-field.

The source of the problem is the lax standards—in most states—for entry into teaching. Indeed, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "States pay more attention to the qualifications of veterinarians treating the nation's cats and dogs than to those of teachers educating the nation's children and youth."

What can the federal government do to see that every classroom has a well-educated teacher? It should certainly *not* pump more money into traditional teacher education programs, which pay far too little attention to mastery of subject matter. It *should* focus on helping all future teachers, even those who plan to teach in elementary school, acquire command of academic fields. For example, it should offer incentive awards to states that require subject-matter examinations of future teachers. The National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities should also develop model examinations for states to use to assess teachers' subject matter knowledge at different levels.

Reforming the Governance of Education

In an effort to shift away from bureaucratic, top down management of education by local school boards, many states and school districts are experimenting with alternative forms of school management—charter schools, contract management, and vouchers. Supporters hope that these new programs will help target public funds to actual instruction rather than to multiple layers of administration. None of the initiatives has been tried long enough to permit a definitive judgment about its effect on student achievement.

Charter schools are public schools that agree to meet certain performance standards in exchange for exemptions from most regulations other than those governing health, safety, and civil rights. Charter schools accept accountability for results in exchange for autonomy in how those results are produced. State legislation determines how charters are granted, what standards must be met, whether teachers must be certified, and whether existing public schools may convert to charter status. If a charter school fails to meet its educational and fiscal commitments, it may lose its charter—in sharp contrast to regular public schools, which may produce poor educational results for years without any penalty. More than a thousand charter schools are in operation today, many in Arizona, California, Colorado, Texas, and Michigan. The primary opposition to charter schools has come from local school boards, which see them as unwelcome competition, and from teachers' unions, which want to protect collective bargaining agreements.

Another form of restructuring is contract management of public schools. Paul T. Hill, Lawrence C. Pierce, and James W. Guthrie have argued that virtually all public schools should be managed by contract, with the local school board selecting managers and leaving them free to meet agreed-upon standards. In recent years, private contractors have assumed the management of some charter schools and also formed partnerships with school districts to manage one or more regular public schools. In 1997-98, the Edison Project was managing twenty-five public schools in eight states and thirteen cities, with most boasting achievement gains and long waiting lists. Today Edison is managing fifty-one schools. Some states prohibit contract management of instructional services. Public employee unions fear that outsourcing any public-sector activity threatens their jobs.

The third important local innovation is vouchers. Two programs, one in Milwaukee (since 1990) and another in Cleveland (since 1996), supply publicly funded vouchers to low income students. The aim is to provide an option for students who are at maximum risk of educational failure. The concept of vouchers for poor kids arouses intense opposition in some quarters, particularly from public employee unions, but also because of constitutional concerns about the participation of religious schools. In Milwaukee, students in the voucher program may enroll in both nonsectarian and religious private schools; the program has been the subject of prolonged legal battles, but it was approved by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in June, and in November the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a challenge to that ruling. In Cleveland, students may also attend both nonsectarian and religious schools; the inclusion of religious schools was barred by an appellate court, but the program remains in effect while the case is on appeal.

The academic effect of the voucher program in Milwaukee is hotly debated (the Cleveland program is so new as to make evaluation all but impossible). The state-appointed monitor in Milwaukee has found no improvement, but independent analysts have reported marked academic gains. Definitive judgment will require more time.

On one issue there is no debate: public opinion is shifting to vouchers. The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll reported in September 1997 that opposition to vouchers has sharply declined over the past five years, from 74 percent to 52 percent. Public opinion was evenly divided when people were asked whether they favor or oppose "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at government expense." Those most likely to support private choice with public funds were blacks (72 percent), nonwhites (68 percent), eighteen-to-twenty-nine-year-olds (70 percent), and urban residents (59 percent).

All these issues must be resolved at the state and district level. The federal government, however, can help states do what they are trying to do and, at the very least, remove federal impediments. An important way to support reform without predetermining any particular result would be to change funding formulas for federal programs like Title I, special education, and bilingual education, so that the money follows the student, as it does in higher education, to any accredited institution. If a state or district prohibits charter schools, contracting, and vouchers, federal dollars would follow students to their regular public school. If a state or district establishes any of these approaches, the federal dollars would follow students to the school of their choice.

The most direct way to reform Title I—and cut its bureaucracy down to size—would be to convert it to a portable entitlement, available to its intended recipient for educational services.

A small but substantial ($80 million) federal program channels funds to states to encourage the start-up of new charter schools (once a school is launched, regular public funding should be adequate to its needs). This program would be improved by refusing funds to states without charter schools. Oregon, for example, has received millions of dollars from the charter program without even passing a charter-school law.

As for vouchers, the federal government should support a five to ten year demonstration program for low income students in at least ten hard-pressed urban school districts. The program should be limited to public school children eligible for the federal free-lunch program. The scholarship should be equal to the average per-pupil expenditure of the district plus any additional funds (Title I, special education) to which the student is entitled. Any school accredited by the state should be eligible to receive scholarship students. A large-scale federal demonstration program, carefully monitored and evaluated, would resolve debates that have been deadlocked by politics and ideology.

The Need to Reform Categorical Programs

The largest categorical federal programs—Title I, special education, bilingual education, Head Start—were created to provide equality of educational opportunity. All were established with high hopes, but none has lived up to the expectations of its sponsors. All are ripe for reform.

Title I, now budgeted at $8 billion a year, distributes federal funds to districts with large numbers of disadvantaged students. Congress has long insisted on spreading Title I funding as widely as possible, thus assuring its political viability but reducing the money available to districts with the largest numbers of poor students. Backers of Title I expected it to narrow the large gap in achievement between poor children and their more advantaged peers, but evaluations in the past three decades have all concluded that Title I has failed to meet that goal. In the main, the added funds have simply not made much difference. Unfortunately, neither the program nor the evaluations were designed to identify the methods or applications that are most effective in improving the academic performance of poor children.

Title I's most striking product, the result of three decades of federal regulations, procedures, and mandates, is its unwieldy bureaucracy. The most direct way to reform Title I—and cut its bureaucracy down to size—would be to convert it to a portable entitlement, available to its intended recipients for educational services. The money should follow the eligible student to the school or tutor of his choice. The fundamental principle must be that the federal money is allocated to benefit needy children, not to sustain a host of redundant administrators.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted in 1975, there was a clear need to protect the right of physically and mentally disabled children to receive free public education. At the time, an estimated one million children were excluded from public schools because of their disabilities. But while special education has grown apace, it has not lived up to its initial hopes of educating disabled children.

Today, more than five million children are enrolled in special education at a cost to the federal budget of $4.8 billion a year—and at a national cost of some $60 billion. Though Washington funds less than 10 percent of special education, it imposes extensive, minutely-detailed mandates on states and districts.

Children described as "learning disabled"—a porous category that lacks any precise or objective definition—now make up about half of all children in special education. Concern is growing about spiraling costs, the inflexibility of federal regulations, and the growth of an unaccountable bureaucracy. Of even greater concern is that special education ill-serves many of the children it is supposed to benefit. After spending nearly a year interviewing students, teachers, parents, and lawyers involved in special education, John Merrow found that only 44 percent of the children graduate from high school and that most children with learning disabilities in special education show "no signs of improvement."

Congress and the administration are reluctant to overhaul special education for fear of offending advocacy groups for children who are deaf, blind, autistic, retarded, or otherwise deserving of special help. In view of the political problem, the best hope for reform is for the administration and Congress to create a special commission removed to the maximum extent possible from the political pressures of advocacy groups, much like the commission that oversaw the closing of U.S. military bases.

The Bilingual Education Act, passed in 1968 to help Hispanic children learn English, has suffered a fate similar to Title I and special education. Although its federal appropriation has

grown ever larger—$354 million in 1998—the program has not succeeded in teaching English to non-English-speaking children.

The key problem has been the preponderance of "bilingual" classes that have been offered in Spanish, not in English. Given that the purpose of bilingual education is to teach English to children who are "limited-English-proficient" and given that competency in English is a prerequisite for success in U.S. education and in the modern economy, the federal program should declare that its goal is rapid, full English proficiency, not bilingualism, and be recast as the English-Language Literacy Program. If the program remains intact, Congress should at least require that no child be assigned to a non-English-language program without explicit parental consent.

. . . if we are serious about equal educational opportunity, then public officials must be willing to make whatever changes will enable these programs to achieve the purpose for which they were created.

Head Start was launched in 1965 as a summer program for half a million disadvantaged preschoolers. Its proponents claimed that a year or two in Head Start would wipe out the cognitive gap between poor children and their middle-class peers. But evaluators reported in 1969 that cognitive gains produced by Head Start were small and temporary.

Nevertheless, Head Start became immensely popular, and its role expanded. Now it provides health, nutrition, social, and psychological services for poor children, as well as employing many of their parents as teachers and aides. In 1998, Head Start served 840,000 children and received appropriations of $4.4 billion.

Head Start should return to its goal of cognitive development. The cumulative evidence from programs like the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, suggests that a high quality program—unlike what is ordinarily offered in Head Start—can make a long-term difference on achievement, high school graduation, and socialization.

As a federal—not state or local—program, Head Start could become a testing ground for high educational standards. Federal officials could develop a curriculum, focused on school readiness, without fear of intruding on state and local responsibility. They could set rigorous and uniform standards for what both teachers and children should know and be able to do. Such a reform would require larger appropriations, higher salaries, and a well-trained staff. But if a high quality Head Start program could improve academic performance and graduation rates and reduce referrals to special education, it would have an even stronger political constituency and would generate enormous savings in later years.

All these federal programs have stakeholders who will fight to maintain the status quo. But if we are serious about equal educational opportunity, then public officials must be willing to make whatever changes will enable these programs to achieve the purpose for which they were created.

Standards and Assessments

Improving academic performance across the board and reducing the gaps among different groups of students require clear academic standards and good tests of student performance in relation to those standards. Through the Goals 2000 program, initiated by the Bush administration and carried on by the Clinton team, the federal government encouraged states to develop academic standards and tests based on those standards. The quality of the states' standards and tests, however, varies widely, as can be seen by comparing state performance standards in eighth-grade mathematics and those reported by NAEP. In Georgia, for example, 83 percent of seventh and eighth graders were proficient in mathematics, yet only 16 percent met NAEP's standard for proficiency; in Maryland, the gap was 48 vs. 24; in North Carolina, it was 68 vs. 15. Only in Delaware and Kentucky were state proficiency standards as rigorous as NAEP's. The National Governors Association and business leaders are currently working to help states improve their standards and tests though Washington, D.C.-based Achieve.

The federal government can also help—and without interfering with the role of the states in setting education policy. In his State of the Union address in 1997, President Clinton proposed establishing voluntary national tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics. Later that year, Congress directed that the tests be aligned as much as possible with NAEP and turned control of the test over to NAEP's governing board. Unfortunately, a large bloc in Congress opposes the tests, and their future is uncertain. Large majorities in every opinion poll support the idea. Parents want to know how their children are doing, and the federal government is the likeliest sponsor of a national test.

The most important national priority must be to redesign policies and programs so that education funding is used to educate children, not to preserve the system.

Congress should also permit school districts and schools to administer NAEP on a district-wide or schoolwide basis, if they wish to compare their performance to NAEP standards. States should be encouraged to "embed" NAEP test items into their own tests to see whether their standards are as rigorous as NAEP standards. States could thus maintain control over their own tests, but calibrate them—if they choose to do so—to the NAEP standards.

Federalism in Education

President Clinton's active interest in education has made the public aware of the crucial role of education in securing individual opportunity, economic growth, and social progress. The increased emphasis on education inevitably brings stresses and strains on our complicated federal system. What is the federal role in an education system run by state and local governments?

That there should be equality of educational opportunity—an ongoing federal priority—is not an open issue. Other questions are harder to resolve. How are we to create the conditions that allow equality of opportunity? How are we to establish programs that encourage excellence? Which level of government should do what? How should we change programs that are ineffective but that have many stakeholders?

At present, American education is mired in patterns of low productivity, uncertain standards, and lack of accountability. Federal education programs have tended to reinforce these regularities by adding additional layers of rules, mandates, and bureaucracy. The most important national priority must be to redesign policies and programs so that education funding is used to educate children, not to preserve the system.

This piece originally appeared in the Winter 1999 issue of *The Brookings Review* and is reprinted with the permission of Brookings Institution Press.

Getting It Right the Eighth Time: Reinventing the Federal Role

Paul T. Hill

Since the passage of ESEA in 1965, the greatest single effect of federal programs has been to weaken schools as organizations and strengthen the forces that tear them apart. This is the result of diverting funds and energy from regular instruction and focusing them on special programs and populations. It is time to rethink the federal role in education. The current rules and regulations constrain states and districts from employing the knowledge and practices that would make a real difference to student performance and academic progress. Today, schools function as holding companies for many separate federal programs. Because of Washington's demands, the instructional experiences of students are fragmented, and responsibility for performance has been diffused. Instead, the federal government should foster local initiatives, hold states accountable, and disseminate information about good and bad results.

It is now clear that every aspect of public K–12 education, from financing, school staffing, use of time, the authority of principals, instructional methods, and school accountability are all profoundly influenced by federal priorities.

Until the 1960s, elementary and secondary education policy was considered "off-limits" for the federal government. Most officials at all levels understood that the Tenth Amendment reserved power over education to the states. Though there were federal programs to reimburse localities for property tax revenues lost because of tax-exempt federal installations, to help communities construct school buildings, and to encourage young people to enter teaching, these were justified because of their links with World War II and the cold war. Starting in the 1950s, presidents also used federal power to enforce court orders on school desegregation. However, all these actions were carefully constructed to avoid federal imposition of instructional priorities and teaching methods.[1]

President John F. Kennedy strove to establish a program of general federal aid to education, but his effort foundered politically on the issue of whether Catholic schools would also benefit from federal funds. President Lyndon Johnson found a way to get around the church-state barriers. Johnson's initiatives, engineered by senior presidential aide Joseph A. Califano, were based on a new theory of federal aid,

the "child benefit theory." Under this theory, the federal government could pay for services to children without increasing funding for schools. Thus, federal funds could benefit children in Catholic schools without supporting religious education. Under the same theory, federal funding for public schools could be shaped in ways that encouraged educators to place greater priority on the education of children who, because of their poverty, racial minority status, or other characteristics, had not been the primary concern of local schools.[2]

Traditional opponents of federal involvement in education were sure the child benefit theory would not prevent federal entanglement with state and local education policy. However, at a time of great national enthusiasm about federal domestic initiatives, Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) won overwhelming Congressional support in 1965.[3]

The events of the ensuing thirty-four years, during which time ESEA has been re-authorized six times,[4] have made it clear that the child benefit theory did nothing to insulate state and local education policy from federal influence. To the contrary, it is now clear that every aspect of public K–12 education, from financing, school staffing, use of time, the authority of principals, and instructional methods, to school accountability are all profoundly influenced by federal priorities. There is no doubt that program practices and the natural evolution of grantor-grantee relationships have profoundly eroded the Tenth Amendment principle of federal non-entanglement.

To many people, including the present author, the constitutional issues are now less pressing than the practical ones: Has the federal role in education that has developed served to improve or damage American K–12 public education? This is a complex question. There is little doubt that federal involvement, beginning in 1965 and built upon thereafter, has succeeded in making education of disadvantaged children a top priority at the national, state, and local levels. However, though federal programs have changed state and local priorities, they have not always helped their intended beneficiaries. And when they have caused changes that helped low income and minority children, federal programs have often done harm to those same children's education—and everyone else's—by weakening the schools. As this paper will show, the greatest single effect of federal programs is to weaken schools as whole organizations and strengthen the forces that tear them apart. They do so by diverting funds and energy away from regular instruction and toward special programs—much as the child benefit theory anticipated and even ordained.

The paper has three parts. The first section reviews the evolution of the federal role in education and shows how the strategy of federal intervention established in the mid-60s had become a spent force by the late 1990s. The second part analyzes federal programs' effects on schools and school systems and on the overall effectiveness of public education. The third part suggests a new vision of the federal role in education.

Development Of The Federal Role

The modern federal role in K–12 education starts with the Great Society. Though there had been a federal Office of Education since 1867, until the mid-1960s it primarily served as a

statistical agency and a bully pulpit for great education leaders. After enactment of ESEA in 1965, the Office of Education, and later the U.S. Department of Education, took on a strong regulatory role and assumed responsibility for promoting educational research and development as well as evaluating the effectiveness of federal programs.

Title I: The Pattern-Setter

Like other Great Society programs, the post-1965 Office of Education and its successor organizations were highly politicized. Title I was founded on a political argument that state and local education politics favored the white middle-class and excluded the poor and minorities. In order to help low income and minority students, the federal government would have to override, and ultimately alter, the innate bias of state and local politics. Title I therefore required that federal funds be tied to easily identified objects or services, and that those assets be used only for the benefit of individual children deemed eligible under federal rules.[5] In the face of evidence that some localities, especially in the South, resisted using federal funds in these ways, the Office of Education created increasingly stringent program rules. These required localities not only to use federal funds as intended, but also to show that as much state and local money was spent on disadvantaged students as on other pupils.[6]

In the first decade of its existence, Title I was a clear political success, providing funds to every congressional district and the vast majority of school districts, dominating the time and attention of local administrators, and generating research and publicity.

This evolution of the federal role was strongly promoted by a coalition of U.S. Office of Education officials and newly burgeoning Washington-based educational interest groups. As Samuel Halperin wrote approvingly in 1975: "ESEA has become a rallying point for those concerned about achieving full educational opportunity for specific segments of the population [leading to]...special programs for out of school youth...migrant workers...neglected youngsters and juvenile delinquents...handicapped children...children forced to speak one language at home and another in the schools...preschool children....Now the social movements which spawned ESEA are merging with those demanding greater child development and day-care services...and have pushed through school lunch, breakfast, special milk, and related programs."[7]

Title I tried to create local bases of political and administrative support by building cadres of federally paid compliance officers in state education departments and local school districts, and by creating low income parent advisory councils that could veto school districts' plans for the use of federal funds. It also put pressure on state and local superintendents by requiring frequent public evaluations of program effectiveness. Pressure to demonstrate student learning gains led most states to focus their Title I money on children in early grades, where reading gains are easier to measure. Performance pressure also led the U.S. Department of Education to require "concentration" of Title I funds in local schools with the highest proportions of low income children.

In the first decade of its existence, Title I was a clear political success, providing funds to every congressional district and the vast majority of school districts, dominating the time and atten-

tion of local administrators,[8] and generating research and publicity. A congressionally mandated study of Title I, led by the present author, concluded that Title I had succeeded in transforming state and local priorities to the point that education of minority and poor children had become the number one topic in American education.[9]

Though the program's effectiveness in raising student achievement was not clear, its effects on changing patterns of service delivery were evident everywhere. By the late 1970s, most state legislatures had funded their own programs that mirrored Title I. Title I could not fund services for every disadvantaged child and its services were normally focused on reading and arithmetic instruction in the lowest income schools. State funded programs often supported similar services for disadvantaged children in elementary and high schools not covered by Title I.

Title I had also demonstrated the federal government's power, via threats to cancel grants that local schools had come to depend on, to force reallocation of state and local funds. School administrators who had resisted Title I as an unwarranted exercise of federal power were succeeded by people who bought into—and became expert at administering—federal programs.

Programs That Built on Title I

Other federal programs built on this successful model. By the mid-1970s, there was a federal program for every issue, problem, or enthusiasm that anyone had any interest in. ESEA now contains more than sixty programs in addition to Title I, funding services for students with limited English proficiency, Native Americans, migrants, and supporting school safety, magnet schools, diverse teacher training initiatives, and many other purposes. In the mid-1970s a major new program for the handicapped built on the Title I example, and the pre-existing Vocational Education program came to imitate it. To varying degrees, these programs all required separate and distinctive services for their beneficiaries and forced equal use of state and local funds. Also like Title I, these successor programs required public evaluation reports, created political leverage for parents and other program supporters, and funded bureaucratic allies and apparatchiks at the state and local levels.

Like Title I, the successor programs typically assumed that most schools provided effective teaching for their mainstream students. Habits of catering to the needs of the white middle-class, however, had made schools unresponsive to the disadvantaged groups that federal programs intended to benefit. Federal programs therefore did not try to change or even to assist schools in performing their regular core programs. Instead, they supported extra services, or the purchase of equipment, for special programs for specified populations. Special staff members provided these services and used equipment paid for from federal program funds. Children for whom federal programs were not specifically intended were not supposed to benefit in any way from the goods and services thereby provided. Thus, in the case of Title I, all students in higher-income schools and higher-achieving students in low income schools were not supposed to benefit from the teachers and materials supported by federal funds. Much the same was true of programs for the handicapped, language minority students, etc.

There were small federal programs intended to help schools and districts improve classrooms and teaching methods and, for a time, the federal government subsidized the training of teachers no matter where they chose to teach. But such initiatives lacked the political appeal of intervention on behalf of children who had suffered neglect or discrimination, and they were not nearly as stable or as well funded as the Title I-style programs.

Research and Development

Simultaneously with the expansion of its grant programs, the federal government also expanded its commitment to research and development. Title I set aside a 0.5 percent share of funds for federal, state, and local evaluations of program effectiveness. The U.S. Office of Education, and later the National Institute of Education, sponsored growing bodies of research on methods of instruction, teacher training, school financing and management, and effectiveness of federal programs. Starting in the mid-seventies, the Bureau for Education of the Handicapped sponsored major research programs on special education.

By the late 1970s the federal government enacted the biggest unfunded mandate of all, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

These investments drew new talent into education research and evaluation, but the expansion of federal investment in and influence on education research was quickly stunted by controversy. In a three-year period from 1973 through 1976, the federal research agenda was subject to the same political forces that shaped federal grant programs.[10] The National Institute of Education was attacked for being irrelevant to the immediate concerns of state and local education agencies and the groups that administer and benefit from federal education programs. Its funding was cut severely and its program, initially supposed to stimulate out-of the-box thinking about education, was quickly brought into line with the priorities of existing federal programs. How this was done and what its consequences were is a subject for another paper.[11]

Programs That Require More Than They Pay For

Until the mid-1970s, federal programs had generally paid for all the activities—services, purchasing, and administrative record keeping—that they required states and localities to undertake. In the late 1970s, however, Congress and federal officials started exploiting all the leverage available to the donor of funds that the recipient had come to rely on. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and its successor agency, the newly created U.S. Department of Education, started deploying *unfunded mandates*. The essence of an unfunded mandate is that it requires new activities that the recipient, not the donor, must pay for. States and school districts that had become accustomed to receiving and using Title I funds found that new strings were attached. If they were to continue receiving Title I and other grant funds, they had to create new sports programs for women, make their buildings accessible to handicapped children, follow federal standards for equal employment opportunity, etc.

By the late 1970s, the federal government enacted the biggest unfunded mandate of all, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. That statute established a new civil right that was limited to a particular class of citizens. It required all school districts to provide "appropriate" services to all handicapped children, as defined by an individualized educational plan approved by parents and experts in education of the disabled. School districts were required to reconcile two quite different principles: to educate handicapped children in the "least restrictive environment" while providing any form of service considered necessary for the child's education. Parents who were not satisfied with a district's plans could seek redress in the courts, and school districts were required to pay for any service or placement required (including, in some cases, placement in private residential facilities), whatever the cost.

By the 1990s the federal government had lost its status as the initiator of new priorities and policies in K–12 education.

The federal government provided some grant funds to pay for these special educational services, but the amounts were never intended to be as great as the additional costs. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act did not derive from Title I but was based on court orders that had established new rules for the education of severely handicapped children in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.[12] It expressly intended to draw state and local funding away from regular education (for all students, including disadvantaged students) toward the education of children labeled as handicapped. How much regular school programs would be affected was anybody's guess: it was simply assumed that Congress and state legislatures would somehow produce the necessary funding. But the principle was established: the federal government could make certain children the beneficiaries of an absolute service entitlement—an entitlement that was established without reference to the needs of other students or the budget priorities and tax capacities of states and localities.[13]

Early supporters of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act claimed that the number of children requiring expensive special services was low, and that the financial impact on regular education would be slight. Critics feared that the demands of parents with severely handicapped children would escalate; others predicted that the numbers of parents seeking special accommodations for their children would increase and an alliance between these parents and handicapped-education providers would lead to uncontrolled expansion of special education programs.

Special education did grow rapidly in the late 1970s and 1980s. Real school spending increased by 61 percent from 1967 to 1991. However, only about one-fourth of the increase was directed at "regular education." The share of expenditures going to regular education dropped from 80 percent to 59 percent between 1967 and 1991, while the share going to special education climbed from 4 percent to 17 percent. Of the new net money spent on education, about 38 percent went to special education for severely handicapped and learning disabled children.[14] Increasing numbers of parents sought individually tailored accommodations for their children, and the definitions of "handicapping conditions" proliferated. Virtually any child who had trouble learning to read or adjusting to the behavioral

demands of schools could be considered handicapped and was therefore entitled to a special accommodation. Litigation on schools' obligations under the law also forced schools to accept responsibility for medical services (e.g., catheterization) and limited schools' ability to deal aggressively with disruptive student behavior.[15]

Not every parent who wanted individualized treatment for his or her child was willing to accept the "handicapped" or "special education label." Thus, many parents and advocacy groups organized to seek special treatment for other children under such labels as "gifted" or "bilingual." The high water mark for such efforts was a proposal made by a Title I reauthorization commission in 1993, to give every child in the United States a judicially enforceable "opportunity to learn" guarantee. To date, no group other than the handicapped has been able to gain an absolute entitlement to services.[16] Once organized for action, however, many of these groups were able to win political concessions from districts and schools.

Though advocacy groups for the handicapped have been able to continue expanding the scope of their entitlements, no other group now seriously expects to gain the same benefits. Judging from recent congressional action, the era of federal prescription and expansion is over. Title I, always the pattern-setter for other programs, was amended in 1994 to reduce regulation and expand the use of "schoolwide" projects. It is now possible for schools with high concentrations of low income children to use Title I funds for general school improvement, rather than for services kept apart from regular instruction. The 1994 "Obey-Porter" amendment to Title I also establishes funding for "whole school design organizations" intended (but not necessarily proven) to help schools overcome the fragmentation caused by many separate state and federal programs.

A Spent Force?

As the Elementary and Secondary Education Act approaches reauthorization in 1999, the federal role is uncertain. Efforts to establish the U.S. Department of Education as the national setter of student achievement standards and the national provider of student performance data (via a national test) have foundered on fear of a nationalized school system. Efforts to use federal funds as the basis for a national education voucher system, or to create tuition tax credits for families sending their children to private schools, have also succumbed to deep partisan conflict.

. . . the federal government has not been able to follow up its success in setting new priorities with effective action.

By the 1990s, the federal government had lost its status as the initiator of new priorities and policies in K–12 education. The states, localities, and the private sector are now the sources of most new ideas and practices—tutoring programs, student learning standards, performance-based school accountability, new teacher accreditation practices, investments in new school designs, etc. The federal government's most widely touted initiative in the past five years, Goals 2000, funded every state to set up a public-private collaboration defining new standards and tests for students. Goals 2000 imitated a six-year program sponsored by the National Business Roundtable. It was watered down after many states complained that the procedures it mandated were unnecessary and burdensome. President Clinton's charter schools initiative

relied on laws already enacted by twenty-seven states and his class size reduction initiative built on a program established two years earlier in California.

Whither the federal role? The next section argues that the federal role must be re-created in light of lessons learned from the thirty-four years' experience summarized above.

What Federal Aid Has Accomplished (For Good And Ill)

There is little doubt that ESEA initiated a process that made education of the poor and disadvantaged move to center stage. Nor is there much reason to believe that states and localities would have accomplished such a dramatic change in priorities on their own. Federal policy altered priorities, incentives, and people. There is now no state superintendent, local superintendent, or principal who does not regard education of the disadvantaged as a primary goal of public education. There is no school of education that does not try to prepare teachers to be compassionate and effective in instructing disadvantaged students.

Public discourse about education has changed since the 1960s. No one seriously questions the importance and moral rightness of providing disadvantaged children with a fair opportunity to gain skills, stay in school, attend college, and achieve advanced training. School systems are now staffed almost entirely by people whose training is deeply influenced by values about education of the disadvantaged. People who talk about trade-offs between equity and quality do so for rhetorical purposes, concluding either that such a trade-off is wrong or that it is unnecessary.

Changes in legal doctrines (e.g., the 1954 *Brown* decision and subsequent Supreme Court actions), and demographic changes that make business more dependent than ever on immigrants and native-born minority workers, have also transformed national priorities. But there is no doubt that federal education programs and initiatives have had profound effects.

Has Washington been able to deliver actions that achieve the goals it has set? Here the answer is far less clear. Low income and minority students' educational attainment has improved significantly over the past thirty years.[17] At the same time, the school systems that the federal government has assisted the most, the big-city districts that serve predominantly minority populations, have declined dramatically and most of their students have fallen out of the race for high-school graduation, college diplomas, and high-skilled jobs.

As this section will argue, the federal government has not been able to follow up its success in setting new priorities with effective action. Many of its programs and rules have, in fact, weakened schools by putting process before results, caused displacement of goals from serving students to guaranteeing administrative compliance, and weakened schools' ability to pursue effective instructional programs and solve the problems presented by their students.

No one intended these outcomes. In fact, the people who write and advocate for federal program regulations can often demonstrate that local educators do not recognize or use all the options they have and that the negative outcomes of federal programs result from choices that state and local educators make. A case in point: until the early 1980s, local

districts administering Title I had to make sure that none of the program's goods and services were used to benefit children who were not Title I-eligible. This meant that Title I services had to be provided in specially dedicated classrooms or at times when only Title I students were present (e.g. early mornings, evenings, weekends, or during the summer). Most school districts, not wanting to require students or teachers to be at school early in the morning, late in the afternoon, or on weekends, decided to offer Title I services during the regular school day. This meant that Title I students were pulled out of their regular classes to get Title I-paid instruction; in some cases, this meant students were pulled out of regular reading class to get Title I reading.[18]

Federal program coordinators often resist local reform initiatives that increase individual schools' control of funds, citing possible disruption of relations with the federal government, and possible job loss for specialists employed to deliver federal program services.

Federal programs were the initial stimuli that led to many undesirable changes at the state and local levels. An analogy with certain diseases of the human body is apt. Anaphylactic shock is the immune system's out-of-control response to a stimulus that is not in itself life threatening. Many people can eat shellfish safely, but the ingestion of an oyster or clam can send some people into anaphylactic shock, a life-threatening chain of events. In theory, something might be done to change the body's response, but the simplest course is to change the patient's diet. Similarly, in face of the fact that state and local school systems have reacted to federal requirements in certain negative ways, the most reasonable response is to consider changing federal programs.

Six analogs to anaphylactic shock are evident in education:

- Many state and local education agencies have become little more than colonies peopled by federal program administrators.
- Efforts to create influence for the parents of children served by federal programs have politicized school decision making and, ironically, made it more difficult for many parents to affect their children's education.
- Federal policy has led states and localities to organize instruction and budgeting around discrete programs—services administered at the district office and delivered to schools—not whole schools.
- The demands of many separate federal and state programs have weakened schools as organizations and turned principals into compliance officers, not leaders of the teaching staff.[19]
- Equity in education has become proceduralized: instructional programs that are created through proper procedures are assumed to be equitable, whether or not they are the most beneficial for students.
- The fact that some students have absolute entitlements to services and others have none has led to zero sum relationships among students, all of whom public schools have an obligation to educate.

Colonization of State and Local Agencies

When Ted Sanders became Ohio's Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1991, he intended to make the state education department a force for school improvement throughout the Buckeye State. He quickly discovered, however, that he had practically nothing to say about the responsibilities of the over 600 employees who nominally worked for him. The vast majority of them were funded by federal programs—Title I, programs for the handicapped, vocational education, etc., and had demanding oversight and enforcement duties. Those people were often the best educated and most experienced employees of the Ohio Department of Education; most of the remaining employees were administrators and financial specialists, not people who could contribute to a statewide school improvement program.[20]

Sanders was not alone. As Table I shows, many state departments of education draw most of their funding from federal sources.[21] In many states, the only employees on the state payroll are those who work directly for the superintendent and those who collect funds from the legislature and write checks to localities. Though some states, notably Kentucky, have been able to steer their own courses independently of the federal government, many have no real agenda beyond keeping federal funds flowing.

Table I

Federal Share of State Education Agency Operating Funds in 1993

	All Federal Sources (%)	*Core Federal Programs (%) (ESEA, Vocational Education, Education of the Handicapped)*
All states	41	29
Michigan	77	29
Iowa	71	47
Alabama	69	25
South Dakota	62	54
Maryland	61	21
New Hampshire	60	34
North Dakota	59	56
Utah	59	24

State agency dependence on federal funds is a direct result of the U.S. Office of Education's effort, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to ensure that its programs were implemented by a state-level workforce dedicated to the program's specific services. The unintended result was to take over the state departments of education. Most state legislatures, seeing how much their departments of education were growing with federal money, reduced their own financial contributions. By the late 1980s, people like Ted Sanders saw that state departments had become hollow shells, able to do little more than receive and distribute federal grants and monitor local compliance with federal program rules.

In theory, state departments of education have broader responsibilities. States are the units of government primarily responsible for K–12 public education, and there is no other institution

able to oversee and help local districts. Starting in the early 1990s, several states tried to reassert control of their departments of education, hoping to turn them into forces for general school improvement. Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, Texas, and Ohio were among the first to try to rehabilitate these institutions. In the mid-1990s, states that were committed to standards-based reform also tried to make their education departments into instruments for general school improvement (e.g., Washington, Maryland, Oregon, Missouri). Though some are starting to make progress, the continuing presence of many paid "colonists" from federal programs remains an obstacle.

Today's chief state school officers are often experts in the administration of federal programs. Their legate in Washington, the Council of Chief State School Officers, supports strong "categorical" regulations on the use of federal funds and opposes initiatives that would give individual schools greater discretion. This represents a major change since 1965, when many chief state school officers opposed federal "encroachment" on the states' traditional freedoms.

Local school systems, especially in large urban districts, have also depended heavily on federal funding to staff their central offices. Federal funds pay for major shares of most school districts' testing and evaluation programs, teacher training programs, and purchases of equipment. Though they are generally not as dependent on federal funding as state departments of education, local districts are heavily influenced and constrained by federal programs and their resident managers. Federal program coordinators often resist local reform initiatives that increase individual schools' control of funds, citing possible disruption of relations with the federal government, and possible job loss for specialists employed to deliver federal program services.

. . . in imitation of federal programs, most states had created separate funding categories for defined purposes; school district offices were supported by federal funds and accustomed to deploying federally paid staff and choosing instructional programs.

School Decision Making Politicized

Since the earliest days of Title I, federal officials have tried to stimulate creation of grassroots support groups for it and other programs like education of the handicapped and bilingual education. Influenced by War on Poverty empowerment strategies, federal regulation writers' preferred approach was to organize the parents of program recipients and give them veto power over local uses of program funds. This, it was believed, would ensure that funds were spent on the right children. Federal administrators also encouraged formation of local interest groups of citizens and educators dedicated to the schooling of specified groups of children. The Title I program pioneered these approaches, but federal administrators of programs for handicapped children raised the creation of local support groups to a high art.[22] Federal programs for the handicapped did more than organize parents; they also gave parents of handicapped children unique legal rights to oversee services proposed for their children and to bring lawsuits against school districts that did not offer what the parents thought their children needed.

Administrators of state programs followed suit. By the mid-1970s, the soft collaborative ideal of parental involvement in education had taken on a hard political edge. Localities where stu-

dents were compelled to attend certain schools because of court desegregation orders tried to compensate by giving parents a chance to influence school programs. The idea of authoritative parent advisory councils influenced the "site-based management" movement that started in Miami and was quickly adopted throughout the country. Teacher groups also demanded decision making power. The idea of shared parent-teacher governance of schools reached its apogee in the 1988 Illinois State law on Chicago reform, which mandated elected local site councils to govern all Chicago schools.

Some schools improved under this new politicization of parent and teacher involvement, but many did not. Many Title I parent advisory councils were inactive, and others were controlled by activist factions that less combative parents could not challenge. Other groups (e.g., parents of the gifted and talented) organized politically to protect their children's education in the face of the special legal rights of parents of the handicapped. As Bryk and others reported about the Chicago school reform, some schools changed dramatically for the better but the majority did not improve and many got dramatically worse as latent rivalries among parent and teacher factions came to the surface and dominated school life.[23]

For schools, as for communities, political engineering by outside parties does not work very well. Nobody knows what a group will do with new powers, or how groups will react to policies that afford advantages to their rivals. One thing is clear, however: politicizing school life draws attention toward the agendas of organized adult groups and away from the more mundane concerns of teaching and learning.

Focus on Programs, not Schools

Until the enactment of Title I, individual schools were small organizations led by principals and energized by collaboration among teachers. Not all schools were good, but it was clear that student learning depended on teachers' ability, effort, and capacity to inspire students.

Title I and subsequent federal programs introduced a new idea: programs and funds controlled outside the school, providing staff and equipment that are sent into the school to perform particular purposes. Program funds were to be managed and spent at the school district's central office, and the teachers and other specialists who were sent into schools were themselves employed and supervised from the central office.

This arrangement promoted development of specialized organizations and created a demand for teachers specially trained to serve low income, low-achieving, disabled, or limited English-speaking students. It also ensured that federal program funds could be tracked to identifiable adults, whose activities could be readily described to federal program auditors and evaluators.

Offsetting these advantages was the fact that programs were developed on a district-wide basis and often did not consider the specific needs of individual schools. Specialized teachers also worked on their own schedules and in their own ways. They might or might not use the same teaching methods and present material on the same schedule as regular classroom teachers. Specialist teachers had no particular need to coordinate their work with classroom teachers or school principals, though many did so on their own initiative. Principals and class-

room teachers had no formal authority to demand that the specialists collaborate with them, though, again, many did so successfully on their own.[24]

As the number of federal programs increased (and as state legislatures enacted additional programs patterned after Title I), separate central office units proliferated. Schools (especially those in poverty areas eligible for several separate programs) were served by increasing numbers of specialist teachers who did not work for the principal and did not need to coordinate with regular classroom teachers. Classroom teachers' responsibility for individual children's learning was diluted, as more and more of their students' instruction was provided outside the classroom and by others.

Efforts to strengthen schools constantly struggle against the centrifugal tendencies created by federal and state program requirements, civil service protections, and work rules established in union contracts.

Federal Title I administrators recognized this as a problem as early as the late 1970s, and progressively softened the requirement that program services be distinct and easily identifiable. State program managers also trained program staff in the importance of coordinating with principals and regular teachers. More recently, Congress has amended the law to allow schools in high poverty areas to use Title I funds for general school improvement.[25]

However, the basic pattern was set: in imitation of federal programs, most states had created separate funding categories for defined purposes[26]; school district offices were supported by federal funds and accustomed to deploying federally paid staff and choosing instructional programs. Most Title I schools also adapted to having specialist teachers come in and out. Teachers and administrators hired after the late 1960s were trained to believe that initiatives for school improvement normally come from some place in the central office, and that change in instructional strategies is possible only if someone outside the school provides permission, ideas, and extra funds. Even when districts tried to reduce school fragmentation by assigning one program staff member to one school, the division of labor between specialized program staff and regular classroom teachers often persisted.

Federal programs other than Title I, especially those for the handicapped, are much harder to re-integrate into the school. The image of school districts and schools as holding companies for many separate programs is now deeply ingrained in administrative structure, funding, career patterns, and the culture of public education.

Weakening Schools as Organizations

The management patterns pioneered by Title I changed the nature of schools from small self-contained organizations into hosts for separate programs. At about the same time, many school boards found that they could no longer meet teacher unions' salary demands. They started to offer unions concessions over teacher work rules, policies on teacher assignment, limitations on teacher responsibility outside their classrooms, and constraints on school principals' management discretion.[27]

The combined result of these trends was dramatic reduction in the integrity of public schools as organizations.[28] Assets (staff members, equipment) were added to or subtracted from schools. Constraints, in the form of new goals, performance quotas, testing programs, and regulations governing treatment of students and teachers, were imposed on schools by school boards, central office administrators, and state and federal funding agencies. Staff members and students were brought into the school or taken out of it in pursuit of district-wide priorities, such as fulfillment of union contracts and maintenance of racial balance. New curricula and staff training programs were selected for whole districts and then infused into schools. Budget shortfalls were met by mandated district-wide reductions in school staffing or services, and the use of budget increases was also determined at the district level, in negotiations between the school board and teachers' union.

Processes like these fragmented students' instructional experience and diffused responsibility for their performance. The child benefit theory, supposedly the basis of the federal role, became submerged in a sea of political and legal settlements about adult claims and entitlements. A teacher who could not expect a child to attend her reading class every day—and whose students might be confused by things they are taught elsewhere—was not clearly accountable for what that student learns. Similarly, a principal who could not coordinate teachers' schedules and methods—and had little to say about who was assigned to teach in the school or whether teachers who had become school mainstays would be abruptly transferred out—could not be expected to run a coherent instructional program.

These effects on schools were recognized as early as the 1970s, and there have been many efforts to remedy them. In the face of consistent research findings that disadvantaged students learn more in schools that are unified around a clear instructional mission,[29] pressure to reverse the fragmenting effects of federal programs has been strong.

Simplification of Title I and other program regulations (starting with the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act in 1980) has continued to the present time. State and local efforts to restore school-level initiative and responsibility started under the banner of "site-based management" and continue today through statewide standards-based reform initiatives. Most statewide reforms are now based on the same theory: schools will improve if the state makes it clear what entire schools must accomplish, makes school staff collectively accountable for student results, gives schools freedom to use their resources in new ways, and provides some investment funds for new materials and teacher re-training.

Efforts to strengthen schools, however, constantly struggle against the centrifugal tendencies created by federal and state program requirements, civil service protections, and work rules established in union contracts. Despite the many efforts to strengthen and unify schools, it is virtually impossible to place all of a school's administrators and teachers into the same boat. Different adults owe loyalty to different program administrators in the central office; many have work rules that limit their obligation to invest time in overall school improvement; and (despite the heroic voluntary efforts of many individuals) many have job security that allows them to resist schoolwide improvement efforts that might require changes in their teaching practices.[30]

School districts like Chicago and San Francisco, which have recently tried to replace failing schools with new ones, have found that inflexible funding mechanisms and teachers' job rights have set a pattern that is extremely difficult to break. Growing districts find that many attractive approaches to creating new schools—e.g., entering agreements with community service agencies or using state charter laws to found schools that will attract teachers from new sources and use leased facilities—are blocked by combinations of expenditure controls and collective bargaining rules. Districts that want to strengthen home-school bonds by allowing families to choose schools often have to tell parents that federally funded benefits cannot follow a child from one school to another.

Federal program supporters in Congress, the Department of Education, interest groups, teacher unions, and academe all recognize the need to combat the forces that pull schools apart and limit local problem solving. But many are also unwilling to give up the security provided by strong regulations, specialized state bureaucracies ensuring proper use of program funds, central office control of purchasing and decision making, and teacher civil service protection. The result is stalemate: the people in charge of education policy want stronger schools but hesitate to give up the elements of policy and administration that make the desired outcomes impossible.

Proceduralization of Equity

Since 1965, the federal role in education has been consistently focused on equity. On the assumption that the middle class and the well-connected take good care of their own children but have insufficient incentive to take care of others, the equity focus has amounted to preference for the poor and minorities. Federal grant programs earmark funds for special services to disadvantaged groups, and regulations try to make sure federal beneficiaries get the full benefit of federal funds plus a fair share of what is provided from state and local resources.

Equity is an oft-used concept but a difficult one. By what criteria would one know when poor, minority, and handicapped children had attained educational opportunities equivalent to those of the white middle-class? At exactly what point would the distribution of opportunities inequitably favor the formerly disadvantaged? No one knows for sure.

Absent a sharp definition, equity has become defined in practice as movement in a particular direction, using every opportunity to direct resources to and create advantages for low income and minority students. The standards for determining whether an education program or practice is equity-enhancing are low: it needs only to create an advantage for a person or group considered disadvantaged. Such an activity can be considered equity-enhancing whether or not it creates the greatest possible advantage per dollar spent, or benefits as many people as possible, or makes some people worse off in the course of making its direct beneficiaries better off.

Thus, equity has become associated with particular services and activities sponsored by the federal government to create advantages for particular groups, whether or not those advantages are real or consistent. For example:

- Title I requires school districts to concentrate funds on certain schools, so that a low income child in one school may get services while an equally low income child in another, higher-income, school does not.
- Federal program regulations require equalization of local spending per child before federal funds can be added on; but they allow local districts to report average rather than actual teacher salaries, so that the schools in the lowest-income neighborhoods, which attract the lowest-paid and least-qualified teachers, actually get far less than their share of funds.[31]
- Programs for education of the handicapped allow parents of individual children to press their demands in the courts, whether or not the benefits they gain are paid for by reducing expenditures on school programs that benefit poor, minority, or disadvantaged students.[32]
- Students classified as "behavior disordered" can be removed from classrooms only if their "Individualized Education Plan" (IEP) is formally changed, regardless of the consequences of their behavior for other students in the class.[33]

By convention, if not in reality, these procedures promote equity because they create advantages for some needy children. But they may not do as much for those children as other arrangements that strengthen the schools they attend, or create significant movement toward the undefined but intensely desired goal of educational equality.

This de facto definition of equity places great emphasis on the rituals of compliance, not on problem solving. It is better suited to the protection of existing programs, and the stabilization of adult working environments, than to finding solutions to the problem of how to improve education for the disadvantaged and handicapped. Associating equity with specific regulations and processes makes federal programs difficult to assail. From this standpoint, critics who propose changes in Title I targeting or decision-making processes and standards in programs for the handicapped are (by definition if not in reality) jeopardizing equity.

Zero Sum Relationships Among Students

For all its restrictions, Title I pays for the administration, services, and evaluation it requires. In recent years, it has allowed local educators to use funds to create schoolwide programs intended to benefit all students, including those not eligible for Title I. Most other federal programs rely on local discretion to identify students who fit general criteria for eligibility, and allow some trade-offs between serving a few students extremely well and providing lesser benefits for large numbers of needy children.

Only one federal program, the program for handicapped children (now called IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act),[34] strictly limits local educators' ability to make such trade-offs, requiring that some students receive all the services they need regardless of the effects on other school or district activities or the needs of other students.

The principle is laudable that handicapped children—or for that matter any group of children—ought to get what they need in order to succeed in school, regardless of cost. But its practical implications are troublesome. If all children have such entitlement but resources are finite, no one's entitlement is absolute. The local school or district is responsible for making realistic decisions about what can best benefit the most students and what accommodations for special needs are possible. However, if only one group has such an entitlement, district and school leaders face a different problem: they are obliged fully to satisfy the entitlements first and then fund the education of all other children out of what is left.

There is no ducking the fact that a zero sum relationship between one favored group and all other children, including minority and disadvantaged children, is untenable in the long run. Needs of handicapped children must be balanced with the needs of others.

The severity of the trade-off between fulfilling entitlements and serving other students depends on the numbers of entitlees and the cost of their services. The numbers of disabled children range from less than 10 percent to nearly 20 percent of the students in some districts. The services that their Individualized Education Plans prescribe can also be expensive. Though services for children with the most common forms of handicapping conditions typically cost only 20 to 50 percent more than local average per pupil expenditures, services to more profoundly disabled or disturbed students can cost five to ten times the district average.

Services to handicapped children were not supposed to draw resources away from regular education: program sponsors hoped that courts would compel full funding of special education services out of "new" money. But experiences with health care costs have made legislatures highly reluctant to write blank checks to coalitions of service providers and beneficiaries. Hence, parents and teachers have learned that rapid growth of special education spending can come at the expense of needed school investments and services for other children, including poor and minority children who are not handicapped.

In the early days of the federal program for handicapped children, it was difficult to see the ways in which funding of special education services affected the regular school program. Though some placements for disabled students were very expensive, they were rare. In a school district serving 5,000 students, a $50,000 placement for one student would require a transfer of at most $10 (and probably far less than that) from the average amount available for the education of any other child. This deduction was difficult to observe, since cross-subsidies among groups of students are created in the school district's central bureaucracy, where parents cannot easily see them. However, as special education has grown and the numbers of students and handicapping conditions have increased, regular classrooms increasingly bear—and show—the cost of accommodations made.[35]

Special education programs did not create school districts' opaque budgeting and resource allocation methods. But by establishing that some students get more than others, programs for the handicapped helped foster a virtually universal feeling among public school teachers and parents that they are not being treated fairly and that they must, therefore, look out for

themselves. As Alfie Kohn has shown, many advantaged parents act on this feeling by using their influence and access to obtain the best placements for their own children.[36]

America's commitment to education of the handicapped, and to helping disabled children to live the most normal lives possible, must remain permanent. There is, however, no ducking the fact that a zero sum relationship between one favored group and all other children, including minority and disadvantaged children, is untenable in the long run. Needs of handicapped children must be balanced with the needs of others.

A Summary Judgment on Federal Programs

As the preceding sections show, the accomplishments of federal policies and programs have come at substantial cost. Federal programs have provided needed funds for many cash-strapped school systems, but they have also set off chains of events that have weakened the very institutions on which all children, rich and poor, depend for their education. Federal programs did not directly cause the current unrest about public education—the press for new schools operated under new rules, the campaign for parental control through school choice, not political involvement, and the belief that public schools are not safe and caring enough—but they contributed greatly to schools' loss of institutional coherence and educators' eroding sense of personal responsibility.

The flight of middle- and working-class parents of all races from city schools,[37] and African-American parents' growing demand for new options and the opportunity to send their children to private schools when nearby public schools are failing,[38] have many sources. But it is hard to see how they would have happened to the current degree without the negative aspects of federal programs discussed above.

There are no villains here. One might blame the people who, in the 1960s and 1970s, were confident that the new federal initiatives would help the poor without harming anyone else (and would provide new advantages for poor children without simultaneously creating new obstacles to their education). The present author, whose work on the 1977 Title I reauthorization made a significant contribution to the regulatory structure of Title I, does not berate himself now for actions taken then, nor should anyone else. Yet refraining from judging past actions does not justify persisting in the face of current knowledge about the harm done by many federal programs and policies. No one can claim that the current chaotic system of laws, regulations, constraints, and preferences is the best one that we Americans could design for our children.

Toward a More Positive Federal Role

How can the federal government's achievements in education be maintained while mitigating the negative effects of federal programs and policies? The federal role in K–12 education has been, in essence, to influence states and localities to place high priority on the education of poor and minority children. Though many localities would probably retain that commitment even if all federal programs were eliminated, some might not. Moreover, some localities,

responsibility for judgments and trade-offs about a child's education from the only people who can make them well, her teachers and parents. If the federal government wants to remain vigilant about whether particular states or localities are neglecting handicapped children, it can do so by sponsoring occasional national evaluations of the services, placements, and outcomes for children with disabilities.

The federal government should redefine its role as supporting local initiatives and spreading information about good and bad results.

- *Define results in terms of student and school performance.* Programs based on detailed fiscal controls and regulatory compliance do not lead to good instruction. The federal government should measure the effects of its programs in terms of overall improvement in the educational outcomes of children, both disadvantaged and advantaged, not on maintenance of a particular administrative or service scheme. To assess results, the federal government should commission national sample-based studies of localities and schools, and provide information on problems to governors and mayors.

- *Attack emergent problems with short-term special-purpose grants.* States will continue to need help solving short-term problems like teacher shortages, lack of technology, and overcrowding. The federal government should avoid creating expectations that particular jurisdictions will receive permanent federal support. It should not fund any state or local government entity for more than three years without at least a one-year hiatus. Further, these short-term interventions should be limited to a fixed percentage (e.g., 10 percent) of all federal spending on K–12 education.

- *Avoid the use of federal incentives to twist state legal frameworks.* In education, the federal government has mastered the techniques of creating decision making processes that favor some interests over others; but the results have not been good for schools or children. Congress and the federal bureaucracy should eschew political engineering, in the understanding that no one can anticipate or control the consequences of a superior government's intervention in local problem-solving and resource allocation processes. This implies avoiding federal prescriptions about who must sign off on decisions, what sorts of planning processes states and localities must follow, and who, if aggrieved, has a private right of legal action.

- *Make national resource investments.* No matter how states and localities seek to improve their schools, they will depend on the availability, both in their regions and nationally, of well-trained teachers, sound techniques for student performance assessment, new technologies and ideas about instruction and school management, and evidence of the effectiveness of particular instructional methods. The federal government should invest in new ideas and fund rigorous clinical trials and demonstrations. However, the results should be disseminated via the marketplace of ideas, not translated into laws, regulations, or incentives.

particularly the poorest rural areas and biggest cities, would have difficulty maintaining even the marginal quality of their instructional programs without continued federal aid.

Must the federal effect on state and local priorities come at the current cost of colonizing state agencies, politicizing school decision making, reducing many schools to holding companies for externally controlled programs, weakening schools as organizations, maintaining a proceduralized approach to equity, and creating zero sum relationships among groups of children? Of course not.

A new federal role can and should be built on a simple set of principles; the final section of this paper will suggest how each can be put into practice:[39]

- *Return to the child benefit theory.* The key action necessary is to direct federal money to children and their schools, not government administrative structures. Congress should consolidate all federal grant programs into one funding mechanism, with procedures for identifying individual beneficiaries, providing funds directly to the schools those children attend, and ensuring that schools attended by beneficiaries get the same amounts of local and state dollars per pupil as other schools in the same district. Federal laws and regulations should not require that money be traceable to particular programs, services, or students. Programs should be built on the simplest principle possible, i.e., that the amount of federal subsidy should be the same for every child who is eligible to receive benefits. (Congress might, however, establish especially high weighting factors for severely disabled children or children in extremely high-cost areas.)

- *Respect, don't impede, school and community problem solving.* Federal policy must work with, not against, the reality that the only people who can help a student are that child's teachers, parents, and neighbors. Washington should avoid buttressing any particular administrative regime or creating permanent groups of federally paid state or local employees. It should, similarly, avoid mandating any particular orthodoxy in educational organization, whether that is "systemic" reform that aligns standards, tests, curriculum and teaching, charter schools, educational contracting, home schooling, cyber-schooling, or anything else. Other than canceling funding for program specific monitors and coordinators, the federal government should neither solidify nor disassemble current state and local administrative structures. It should take a permissive but neutral stance toward such innovations in education provision as lump-sum budgeting of schools, private provision of school space and staffing, investment and school management by non-governmental entities, and voucher plans that expand educational options for the disadvantaged.

- *Recognize that handicapped children, like other children, are parts of the communities in which they live.* No civil rights guarantee can change the fact that every child's education depends on the capacities of local schools. Federal policies should provide extra funds for the education of children with disabilities, but laws that create specific service entitlements must be amended. Federal laws and regulations should not try to remove

Putting the Principles into Practice

No state or locality has created policies that follow all of these principles. Some, however, are moving in ways that facilitate problem solving, innovation, and results-based accountability. Governor Gary Locke of Washington has proposed a student-based funding formula that would give individual schools control of the vast majority of their funds. School districts like Seattle and Cincinnati are also moving toward student-based funding and increasing schools' freedom to buy what they need: teachers, materials, computer time, staff development, technical assistance and advice. Kentucky is helping schools find qualified private organizations to provide advice, ideas, and professional training.

Many states and localities are trying to develop high quality choices, and to encourage families to find schools that they can trust to meet their children's needs. California, Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, and twenty-five other states have enacted charter school laws that allow public education to be provided by a variety of entities, public, non-profit, and private. Chicago has also used the Illinois charter school law and its general procurement authority to establish fifteen new charter schools and nearly a hundred new small schools. School districts in several western states are serving home schoolers via "cyber-schools" and Portland, Oregon has entered into contracts with more than twenty community and religious groups to provide alternative schools for troubled youth.

None of these initiatives is perfect, or a complete solution to the educational problems of the communities in which they are being tried. But all are promising. The federal government should redefine its role as supporting local initiatives and spreading information about good and bad results. It should not sustain a role that impedes, and in many cases prevents, promising state and local initiatives.

To redefine the federal role, Congress should first consolidate all federal grant programs and create clear definitions of beneficiaries. Because some of the data required to identify individual children can be collected only at the local level, federal grants would have to follow the general procedures used by Title I: use census data (poverty counts) to allocate funds to the county level and use locally collected data (e.g., free lunch counts, surveys of family language backgrounds, school surveys to identify handicapped children) to identify beneficiaries. These assessments might best be done at the county level, rather than by individual school districts. Government agencies that distribute funds should be paid administrative fees for their services, but these should not lead to establishment of permanent federally funded monitoring staffs.

Congress might allow localities to set age level priorities (e.g., spend all federal grants on children in the first four years of school, or provide twice as much federal money per beneficiary pupil in grades 6–8 as in grades 9–12). But it should not allow localities to create horizontal inequities among beneficiary children of a particular age, no matter where they go to school. Children's beneficiary status should depend on their demographic characteristics, not on their test scores or other school performance: schools and students who succeed in overcoming disadvantages should not be penalized.

The U.S. Department of Education will need to develop clear funding criteria and a mechanism for check writing and independent auditing of funds. The Department should also contract out for frequent assessments of services and results; it should not rely on self-reporting systems that depend on recipients of funds to claim that they have used them properly.

The Secretary of Education should control a very substantial fund for investment and responses to emergent problems of states and localities. The Secretary could possibly, in consultation with a board representing Congress, presidential appointees, governors, and local educators and school providers, devote as much as $1.5 billion per year to specific problem-solving activities. Because this fund could not become an entitlement for any locality or function, and no one program could continue for more than three years, the use of this fund could be disciplined by becoming a significant issue in presidential campaigns.

The federal government should also become a major source of research and evaluation results relevant to school practices and use of funds. These tasks might be accomplished better by a federally funded national trust or foundation than by a standard federal agency structure. A companion paper will fully develop this idea.[40]

Can these changes be made during the coming review of ESEA? Of course they can, if Congress and the President decide to do so. A reform of this scope would require scrutiny of some programs that do not normally come up for reauthorization at the same time as ESEA, for example, Vocational Education, IDEA, and the Department of Education's research structure. There is, however, no reason why those programs cannot be considered for reauthorization on the ESEA timetable. Including such programs in a review of ESEA is a necessary precondition for creating a rationalized and effective federal role in education.

Would these arrangements establish a perfect federal role for all time? Of course not. Just as today's problems could not be anticipated in the 1960s and 1970s, the challenges facing America's schools in the year 2010 cannot be foreseen now. Nor is it possible now to rule out of the federal system all future efforts by interest groups to create special advantages for themselves. Groups of providers and beneficiaries will always try to use federal power and dollars to create and solidify advantageous political and legal arrangements. Any new structure for federal action must be open to amendment in light of circumstances and periodically defended from well-intentioned but destructive raids. To coin a phrase, it will be one thing to create a new and more salubrious federal role, and quite another to keep it.

---

1 Federal subsidies to vocational education, which were established by the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, did not raise fundamental constitutional objections because they provided subsidies to post-secondary education and employers as well as K-12 school systems.

2 See, for example, John F. Hughes & Anne O. Hughes, *Equal Education, A National Strategy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), Ch. 2.

3 Samuel Halpenn, "ESEA: Decennial Views of the Revolution I: the Positive Side," *Phi Delta Kappan* 57 (1975): 147-151.

4 Federal programs included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act now spend approximately $12 billion each year: $7.8 billion for Title I and the remainder for smaller programs such as migrant education, bilingual education, teacher professional development, school safety, and magnet schools.

5 Federal policy in this regard was influenced strongly by University of Chicago professor Benjamin Bloom's research showing that disadvantaged children could benefit by "compensatory" (e.g., additional) instruction. On the influence of Bloom's work see Hughes and Hughes, *Equal Education*, 43.

[6] Washington Research Project, *Title I of ESEA: Is It Helping Poor Children?* (New York: NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1969). See also Hughes & Hughes, *Equal Education*, Ch. 2.

[7] Halperin, "Decennial Views," 149.

[8] See, for example, Jane Hannaway, "Administrative Costs and Administrative Behavior Associated with Categorical Programs," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 7 (1985): 57-64; Jane Hannaway & Lee S. Sproull, "Who's Running the Show? Coordination and Control in Educational Organizations," *Administrator's Notebook* 27 no.9 (1978-79): 1-4.

[9] National Institute of Education, *Final Report of the NIE Compensatory Education Study* (Washington DC: U.S Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1977).

[10] Lee Sproull & Stephen Weiner, *Easier Said Than Done: The Function of Images in Establishing a New Bureaucracy*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, California, 19-23 April, 1976).

[11] Paul T. Hill, "Future of the Federal Role in Education Research and Development," in Diane Ravitch, *Brookings Papers on Educational Policy*, (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 1999 [Forthcoming]).

[12] See *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Pennsylvania*, 343 Supp. 279, 307 (D.D. Pa. 1972).

[13] See David Neal & David L. Kirp, *The Allure of Legalization Reconsidered: The Case of Special Education*, (California: Stanford University, California Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance, 1983). See also Paul T. Hill & Doren Madey, *Education Policymaking Through the Civil Justice System* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1982).

[14] See Richard Rothstein & Karen Hawley Miles, *Where's the Money Gone? Changes in the Level and Composition of Education Spending* (Washington DC: The Economic Policy Institute, 1995).

[15] On rules for dealing with student behavior see Jackson Toby, "Getting Serious about School Discipline," *The Public Interest* 133 (1998): 68-83.

[16] The HEW Office for Civil Rights did succeed for a while in creating an administratively-enforced entitlement to bilingual education, based on the principles established in *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). *Lau* had force of law only in the defendant school district, San Francisco, but HEW applied the terms of the court order to school districts throughout the country.

[17] See, for example, Christopher Jencks, *The Black-White Test Score Gap* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 1998). See also David Grissmer & Sheila Kirby, *Student Achievement and the Changing American Family* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1996).

[18] See, for example, Jackie Kimbrough & Paul T. Hill, *The Aggregate Effects of Federal Education Programs* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1981).

[19] Toby, *Getting Serious*.

[20] Governor's Task Force on Education, *Model for the Future...an Organization Study of the Ohio Department of Education*, (Columbus: State of Ohio, 1991).

[21] Data in the text are drawn from U.S. Department of Education, *The Use of Federal Administrative Funds for Administrative Costs* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, 1998).

[22] See Paul T. Hill & Ellen L. Marks, *Federal Influence over State and Local Government: The Case of Nondiscrimination in Education*. (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1982).

[23] Anthony S. Bryk, *Democratic Localism: a Lever for Institutional Renewal* (Los Angeles: Westview Press, 1997).

[24] For a detailed account of these problems and schools' responses see Jackie Kimbrough & Paul T. Hill, *Problems of Implementing Multiple Categorical Education Programs* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1983).

[25] Mary Jean Le Tendre, "Title I Schoolwide Programs: Improving Schools for All Children," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 2 (1996): 109-11.

[26] State-level litigation about whether different groups were getting equitable shares of federal and state program funds also led to rigid court-imposed funding categories, so that districts and schools are forced to spend fixed sums for items like student transportation, even when they would prefer to use additional funds for teachers, instructional materials, etc. See, for example, *Washington State Special Education Coalition vs. State of Washington*, et al. (known as the Doran Decision III), Thurston County Superior Court (WA), 1988.

[27] See Lorraine McDonnell & Anthony Pascal, *Teacher Unions and Educational Reform* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1988). See also Lorraine McDonnell & Anthony Pascal, *Organized Teachers in American Schools* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 1979).

[28] For an account of the effects of these programs see Kimbrough & Hill, *Aggregate Effects*.

[29] See, for example, Fred M. Newmann, et. al., *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools For Intellectual Quality* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996); James S. Coleman & Thomas Hoffer, *Public And Private High Schools: The Impact Of Communities* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); and Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, et. al, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Paul T. Hill, Gail E. Foster & Tamar Gendler, *High Schools with Character* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1990); Robert L. Crain, *The Effectiveness of New York City's Career Magnet Schools* (New York: Columbia University Institute on Education and the Economy, 1992); Adam Gamoran, "Do Magnet Schools Boost Achievement?" *Educational Leadership* 54 no.2 (1996): 42-46; and Paul T. Hill, Lawrence Pierce, Paul Schneider & Sara Taggart, *Schools' Integrative Capital* (Seattle: University of Washington Center on Re-Inventing Public Education, 1998).

[30] See, for example, Donna Muncey & Patrick McQuillan, *Reform and Resistance in Schools and Classrooms: An Ethnographic View of the Coalition of Essential Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). See also Bruce A. Bimber, *The Decentralization Mirage: Comparing Decision-Making Arrangements In [illegible]* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1994).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[31] Kati Haycock, "Eliminate Gross Disparities under Your Control," *School Administrator* (May 1997): 30-31.

[32] See Kimbrough & Hill (1979) for evidence that some services for handicapped children are paid for by reducing what is provided to Title I-eligible students who are not also handicapped.

[33] For a discussion of the consequences of these requirements for handicapped children as well as for others, see Toby, *Getting Serious*, 68-83.

[34] Patricia Morrissey, "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997: Selected Observations," *National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin* 82 no.594 (1998): 5-11.

[35] As one superintendent said in an interview conducted for this paper, "If people knew how much special education drives a school system's budget, there would be a revolution."

[36] Alfie Kohn, "Only for My Kid: How Privileged Parents Undermine School Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* (April 1998): 569-577.

[37] Denis P. Doyle, *Where the Connoisseurs Send Their Children to School* (Indianapolis IN: Hudson Institute, 1995).

[38] See, for example, Sari Horwitz, "Poll Finds Backing for D.C. School Vouchers; Blacks Support Idea More Than Whites," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1998. See also Jean Johnson & John Immerwahr, "First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools," *American Educator* 18 no.4 (1995): 4-45.

[39] For a compatible, but different, set of principles see Chester E. Finn, Jr. & Michael J. Petrilli, "Washington versus School Reform," *The Public Interest* 133 (1998): 55-64.

[40] See Hill, *Future of the Federal Role*.

Contributors

Richard G. Elmer is Deputy Commissioner of Education for Colorado.

John Engler is Governor of Michigan.

Chester E. Finn, Jr. is John M. Olin fellow at the Manhattan Institute and President of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. He served as assistant U.S. secretary of education from 1985 to 1988.

Floyd Flake is pastor of Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church in Queens, New York. He is a former Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where he represented New York's 6th congressional district.

Eugene W. Hickok is Secretary of Education for Pennsylvania. He is also chairman of the Education Leaders Council, a network of state and local education leaders who promote fundamental education reforms.

Paul T. Hill is Research Professor in the University of Washington's Graduate School of Public Affairs, where he directs the Center on Re-Inventing Public Education. He is also a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Carol Innerst, former education reporter for *The Washington Times*, is a free-lance writer specializing in education issues.

Marci Kanstoroom is Research Director of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and Research Fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

Lisa Graham Keegan is Superintendent of Public Instruction for Arizona.

Don McAdams is a member of the Board of Education of the Houston Independent School District.

William J. Moloney is Commissioner of Education for Colorado.

Tyce Palmaffy is a reporter and researcher at *The New Republic*. He formerly worked on the staff of *Policy Review: The Journal of American Citizenship*, where he wrote extensively on education issues.

Michael J. Petrilli is Program Director of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and Research Associate at the Manhattan Institute.

John R. Phillips, a senior at Duke University, was an intern at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in 1998.

Stanley Pogrow is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Arizona. He is the developer of the Higher Order Thinking Skills program for Title I and learning-disabled students, and the SuperMath pre-Algebra curriculum.

Diane Ravitch is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Manhattan Institute and a Senior Research Scholar at New York University. She served as assistant secretary of education during the administration of George Bush.

Matthew Rees is a Washington-based reporter for *The Weekly Standard*, where he writes about Congress and the Clinton administration. Before joining the Standard, he was an editorial page writer at *The Wall Street Journal* in New York and editorial features editor of *The Wall Street Journal Europe* in Brussels.

Susan Sclafani is Chief of Staff for Educational Services at the Houston Independent School District.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

1627 K Street, N.W., Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: (202) 223-5452
FAX (202) 223-9226

http://www.edexcellence.net

To order publications: 1-888-TBF-7474
(single copies are free)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE